

AIR FORCE RECRUITING

CONSIDERATIONS FOR INCREASING THE PROPORTION OF
BLACK AND HISPANIC PERSONS IN THE ENLISTED FORCE

MARTIN W. PELLUM, MAJOR, USAF

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Considerations for Increasing the Proportion of Black and Hispanic Persons in the Enlisted Force

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About the Author



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Maj Martin W. Pellum entered the Air Force in 1979 after completing a bachelor of arts degree in psychology and graduating as an Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) Distinguished Graduate from Southern Illinois University. He began his Air Force career as a squadron executive officer and wing headquarters squadron section commander at Plattsburgh Air Force Base (AFB), New York. After obtaining an master of science degree in industrial and organizational psychology from Purdue University in 1983, he began a series of assignments in the personnel and training analysis field. He worked retention, assignment, and quality-of-life issues at the Air Force Military Personnel Center, led a congressionally mandated research effort to link enlistment standards to training and on-the-job performance at the Air Force Human Resources Laboratory, and supported the improved recruiting, selection, classification, and training of AFROTC and Officer Training School (OTS) officers while at Headquarters Recruiting Service. In January 1992 Major Pellum was transferred to the Headquarters Air Training Command (ATC) Quality Office where he was instrumental in developing and implementing Quality Air Force throughout the command and integrating its concepts in all formal ATC training programs. He was selected as the 1993–94 Air Education and Training Command's command-sponsored research fellow. He graduated from resident Air Command and Staff College (ACSC) in June 1994 and was subsequently assigned as commander, 348th Recruiting Squadron, Little Rock AFB, Arkansas. Major Pellum is married to the former Pamela Bennett and has three children.

Preface

Gen Merrill A. McPeak, former chief of staff of the Air Force, clearly defined the Air Force mission as “to defend the United States through the control and exploitation of air and space.” Despite having the most advanced weapon systems in the world, the Air Force depends on its people to carry out this mission. People fly the aircraft, position the satellites, relay the communications, load the bombs, move the supplies, fix the equipment, and provide the security. The Air Force provides opportunities to experience challenges, grow intellectually, and attain important life and job skills while serving the nation in a most time-honored way.

If the Air Force reflects America’s strength, its members reflect America’s people. But this has not always been the case. Until the last few decades, black and Hispanic Americans were denied equal opportunities in the military. Minority representation in the armed forces has been and likely will continue to be a political topic of debate as the entire country and especially corporate America grapple with issues of fairness and equal opportunity amid changes in the nature of work and in America’s workforce.

Jobs in the future will be increasingly complex. This appears especially true for the Air Force as new technologies increasingly perform tasks previously done by airmen or create completely new sets of job tasks for the airmen to do. Operating in this high-tech environment will demand greater and greater intellectual and technical skills.

Enlisting a representative proportion of blacks and Hispanics into the Air Force may prove increasingly difficult. Minorities will comprise an increasing share of the United States population—approximately 50 percent by the middle of the next century. The socioeconomic circumstances of a large portion of this growing minority community will continue to place many blacks and Hispanics at a disadvantage when it comes to competing for a decreasing number of the high-tech Air Force jobs. This undesirable state of affairs is aggravated by the fact that more minorities of the caliber sought by the Air Force will be attending college and have already demonstrated a decreasing propensity to consider joining the military. Addressing this polarity in the minority community will pose a great challenge for Air Force recruiters, especially as military budgets continue to decline and resources for advertising and incentives are brought into question.

This paper is about recruiting black and Hispanic enlisted members. It identifies several significant factors to consider in developing a synergistic recruiting program aimed at acquiring blacks and Hispanics with the qualities needed to successfully perform increasingly complex Air Force job tasks and acquiring them in the numbers proportionally representative of society. It is not intended to outline step-by-step procedures nor to reveal “the” answers. The paper is written to highlight the issues and to appeal to a wide-ranging audience.

This effort would not have been possible without the support of many people. I am eternally grateful to my wife Pam and our children, Nick, Matt, and Danielle, for helping me endure this year apart from them—may it never happen again. Thanks

to the mentorship and continuous encouragement of Lt Col Mike Schiefer and the support his staff at Headquarters Recruiting Service, provided me in gathering and interpreting data. Finally, thanks to my office mates, Maj Tommy Mora and Maj Mert Miller, and my ACSC friends, especially Maj Nellie Riley and Maj Dan Taylor, for pushing me to "just get the paper done."

Chapter 1

Introduction

It is essential to the Hunnish nation that we have in our service leaders at every level who possess the skills, abilities, and attitudes that will enable them to successfully carry out the responsibilities incumbent to their office.

—Atilla the Hun

A significant reduction in the size of the United States military services began in the late 1980s and picked up speed with the end of the cold war. The Air Force enlisted only about half the number of persons in 1993 as it did in 1986. Nevertheless, it remains one of the country's major employers, providing training, education, and career opportunities for a wide range of America's youth, including persons who may have limited employment prospects elsewhere.¹ As the force gets smaller and the demographic makeup of the country changes, senior leaders want to ensure that the Air Force continue to provide opportunities to a "cross section of America."² Recruiting the right people is the mechanism that will make this happen.

This paper explores several of the issues personnel policy makers need to consider in order to "recruit people to effectively lead and mentor a more diverse future Air Force."³ It is structured with recruiting's three major purposes in mind:

1. Increase the pool of job applicants at minimum cost.
2. Increase the success rate of the selection process by reducing the number of applicants who are either poorly qualified or have the wrong skills.
3. Meet the organization's legal and social obligations regarding the demographic composition of its workforce.⁴

Increasing the size of the applicant pool simply means increasing the ratio of applicants to positions available. It entails enticing more people to become job candidates. An organization can be more selective in whom it hires when more people than it needs want to work for it. The greater the number of applicants, the greater their diversity and the easier it is to distinguish one candidate's qualifications from those of another. A large number of applications allows the organization to raise its qualification standards and/or to rank order applicants to skim off the "cream of the crop"—those persons who will most efficiently contribute to the success of the organization.

There are costs associated with increasing the size of the applicant pool. Advertising to increase awareness of the organization and the opportunities it offers costs money, as does administering tests, conducting interviews, pro-

cessing of paperwork, and maintaining a recruiting staff. The variable costs rise incrementally as the applicant pool increases in number. Convincing more highly qualified candidates to join one's organization often requires additional monetary and related incentives since other institutions are also competing to attract these candidates. An analysis of the trade-offs between costs to increase the size of the applicant pool and the benefit of having more applicants can be very complicated. This analysis is more easily accomplished if the organization has defined its measures of success and the desired individual attributes of employees.

Increasing the success of the selection process depends upon knowing those characteristics that make it easier for applicants to complete training and become proficient in performing designated job tasks. Several issues are embodied in this statement. It implies that the organization has a thorough understanding of the tasks individuals are being recruited to perform, what constitutes successful performance of each task, and an understanding of the process leading to job proficiency. It implies being able to discriminate between employees in terms of their successful and efficient movement through the indoctrination and training process and in terms of their future job performance. The term *discriminate*, as used here, means there are efficiency and effectiveness differences in people's performance that can be seen and measured; some people progress smoothly through the system and perform well each step of the way while others do not.

Finally, it implies there are personal characteristics identifiable during the recruiting phase that are related to subsequent performance. This means there are preemployment characteristics such as scores on tests, education level, and work experiences that are predictive of later performance; these characteristics can be used to predict who will be the more efficient and effective performers for the organization. The stronger the relationship between measured preemployment characteristics and performance in training and on the job, the more reliably recruiters can identify and select persons who will contribute to the organization's success and avoid those who will not.

While this quantitative approach may form the basis of an organization's recruiting and selection system, it is certainly not the sole factor. Recruiters must operate within an environment shaped by legal, social, and policy guidance as to the desired demographic composition of the organization's workforce.

Meeting legal and social obligations regarding demographics means recruiters must consider personal characteristics in applicants besides those overtly related to successful and efficient movement through the indoctrination and training process and those predictive of performance on the job. Fair employment practice issues have grown very diverse and rather complicated since the landmark 1964 Civil Rights Act and will not be reviewed in detail in this paper.⁵ In a nutshell, organizations cannot use selection practices that result in unequal consequences for people of different race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. When an organization does use valid selection measures related to bona fide business needs and they result in a different outcome for

people of a minority group (racial, ethnic, religious, or otherwise), the organization may take affirmative action steps to alleviate the differences. Depending on the circumstances, the organization may be directed by the courts to take such steps. Affirmative actions may include remedial education to help raise entrance test scores, specialized training programs to build requisite skills, and guaranteed jobs or tailored incentive programs to attract high-quality minority applicants.

Social obligations frequently incorporate groups of people not specifically covered by legislative guidance or traditional affirmative action programs. An organization may focus on recruiting persons from low economic brackets, relatives of current or past employees, or persons in the immediate community rather than from across the state or nation. Organizations like the military have been characterized as having a social obligation to allow citizens to serve their country. When asked why the Air Force does not concentrate its recruiting efforts in a few, highly populated areas, Brig Gen John McBroom, commander of the United States Air Force Recruiting Service, replied, "Because this is the *United States Air Force*" (italics added).⁶ Legal and social obligations add another major dimension to the recruiter's job.

Recruiters must balance this tripartite set of recruiting purposes in working toward the overall recruiting mission. This frequently is difficult to do because the purposes sometimes appear to be at odds with each other. For example, raising job qualification standards to increase the predicted success rate of new recruits may result in excluding members of a minority group, particularly when written tests are used.⁷ Similarly, developing special advertising campaigns and assembling incentive packages to entice high-caliber people may overextend limited recruiting funds and run counter to keeping costs down. Nevertheless, recruiters are asked to make contact with as many potential candidates as possible so they can find highly qualified persons and increase the proportion of recruits who will be successful and, at the same time, target their recruiting efforts toward attracting persons from specific groups. Clearly, this is no small task.

The following chapters will address several issues personnel policymakers and recruiters must consider in balancing the recruiting functions described above. Chapter 2 will discuss the sociopolitical debate on minorities serving in the military. While the term *minority* is very broad and itself subject to debate,⁸ the term is used in this paper to mean persons who are racially black and/or ethnically of Hispanic descent.⁹ These are the two groups of primary focus for Air Force minority recruiting.¹⁰ Chapter 3 is a brief overview of the Air Force advertising and promotion program supporting the recruiting efforts. Chapter 4 addresses what motivates young people to join the Air Force today. Chapter 5 covers how enlistment and job qualification standards are derived, why the search for quality recruits is important, and how changes in Air Force jobs and shifts in the demographics of America could impact the recruiting process. Finally, Chapter 6 will draw together implications for recruiting minority persons, specifically blacks and persons of Hispanic origin.

Notes

1. John J. Glish, "Military Reduction to Hurt Blacks," *Chicago Tribune*, 24 October 1991, 30.
2. Dr Sheila E. Widnall, secretary of the Air Force, address to the Paul Revere Chapter of the Air Force Association, Hanscom AFB, Maine, 18 November 1993.
3. _____, "Sharpening America's Competitive Edge: the Air Force Role," address to the Air Force Association Los Angeles National Symposium, Los Angeles, Calif., 29 October 1993.
4. Robert D. Gatewood and Hubert S. Field, *Human Resource Selection* (New York: CBS College Publishing, 1987), 8.
5. For an excellent review, see James Ledvinka, *Federal Regulation of Personnel and Human Resource Management* (Boston, Mass.: Kent Publishing Co., 1982).
6. Quoted in Dr Sheila E. Widnall, "The State of the Quality Air Force: Adapting to Change," address to the Air Force Association National Convention, Washington, D.C., 14 September 1993.
7. Elsie Moore, "Standardized Tests and Black Youths," in *The State of Black America: 1991*, ed. Janet Dewart (New York: National Urban League, Inc., 1991), 55.
8. W. B. Allen, "Blacks? Animals? Homosexuals? What is a Minority?" *Vital Speeches*, 15 January 1990, 204.
9. The Air Force codes race as outlined by the Office of Management and Budget, Statistical Directive No. 15, "Race and Ethnic Standards for Federal Agencies and Administrative Reporting," (*Federal Register* 43: 19269-19270, 4 May 1978) which also governs the US Census Bureau reporting procedures. Four main categories of race are used: (1) white, (2) black, (3) Asian/Pacific Islander, and (4) American Indian, Eskimo, and Aleut. Hispanic is an ethnic group referring to "persons of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Central or South American, or other Spanish culture or origin, regardless of race," meaning persons could consider themselves members of any race and Hispanic. All Air Force race and ethnic data is self-reported; accession data is extracted from applications for enlistment/commission. For reporting purposes, individuals who indicate they are of Hispanic origin are reported as Hispanic and not double-counted as belonging to a specific race. (Steven Heitkamp, Headquarters AFMPC Force Analysis Branch, briefing, "How the Air Force Personnel Data System Tracks Race/Ethnic Group Data," January 1992.)
10. Talking Paper, Col Henry J. Williams, Headquarters USAF Recruiting Service, RSOM, Randolph AFB, Tex., subject: Minority Recruiting, 23 October 1992.

Chapter 2

The Sociopolitical Debate on Minority Service in the Military

For more than 200 years, members of racial and ethnic minorities have served in the United States military in one capacity or another and have participated in every war and conflict that arose.¹ Despite evidence of the value of their contributions, the right of minorities to serve their country and their capacity to do so as soldiers, sailors, and airmen were debated for years.² In 1948 in an effort to end racial segregation in the services, President Harry S Truman issued Executive Order 9981, establishing a policy of “equality of treatment and opportunity for all persons in the armed services without regard to race, color, religion, or national origin,” and creating an advisory committee to review relevant military rules, procedures, and practices.³ This one act certainly did not solve all the racial and ethnic problems in the military, but it did set the services on course for achieving levels of equality unsurpassed in the civilian sector today.⁴ However, debates on the services’ personnel policies with respect to minorities continue; the House Armed Services Committee recently initiated a task force to examine the “nature and scope of equal opportunity problems in the military.”⁵

Since the advent of the all-volunteer force in 1973, the main debate relative to recruiting racial and ethnic minorities has had two seemingly inconsistent sides associated with it. On one side is the issue of the disproportionately high percentage of minorities, specifically blacks, that have entered and stayed in the military.⁶ This issue has many different angles and tangents. For example, author Sue Berryman proposes that concern with the overrepresentation of blacks in the military may stem from concerns that the military will become increasingly distinct from the larger society and form values that conflict with civilian majority values.⁷ The principal issue, however, is that the presence of blacks and Hispanics in the armed forces in greater proportions than in the general population unfairly places the risk of defending the nation on their shoulders.⁸

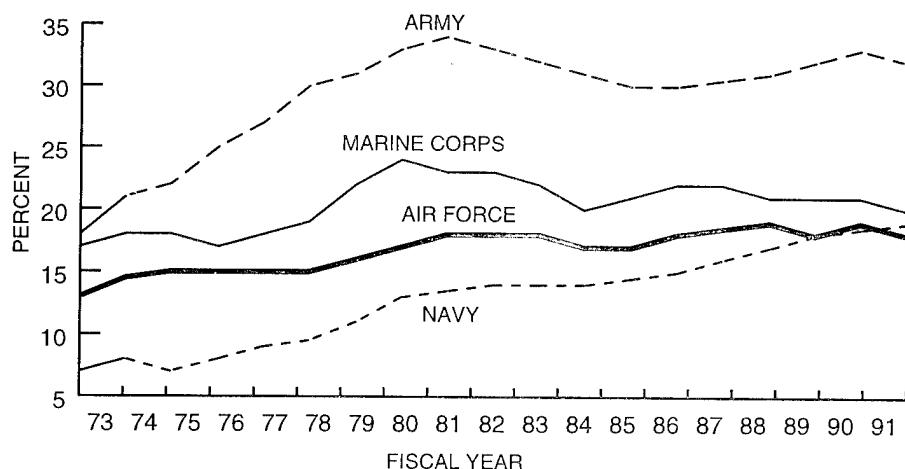
On the other side is the issue that in addition to providing for the defense and security of the nation, the military contributes directly to the national well-being by employing over 200,000 young people each year, placing them in a “level-playing-field” environment, providing them skill training, and returning them to society with, as former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen Colin Powell said, “a better sense of order in their lives, of self-discipline and self-appreciation.”⁹ Since a greater portion of racial and ethnic minorities are

from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, accessing more into the military is believed by many of them to be the morally right thing to do; it affords many opportunities they might not get anywhere else—it is an investment in the nation's best interest.

These issues clearly have a political ring to them. The fact is, as "war is a mere continuation of policy by other means,"¹⁰ politics establishes the parameters in which the military must operate. This includes the Air Force's manpower policies. Therefore, this chapter addresses the issue of minority representation in the armed forces in more detail because it has a direct effect on Air Force recruiting practices. It presents data on black and Hispanic membership in the military services and briefly outlines the thoughts and concerns various groups have toward the representation issue.

Minority Representation in the Military Services

The percentage of blacks and Hispanics in the total force has steadily increased since the end of the draft (fig.1). Approximately 7 percent of the military officer corps and 22 percent of the enlisted force are black, while 2.4 percent and 5.7 percent, respectively, are Hispanic.¹¹

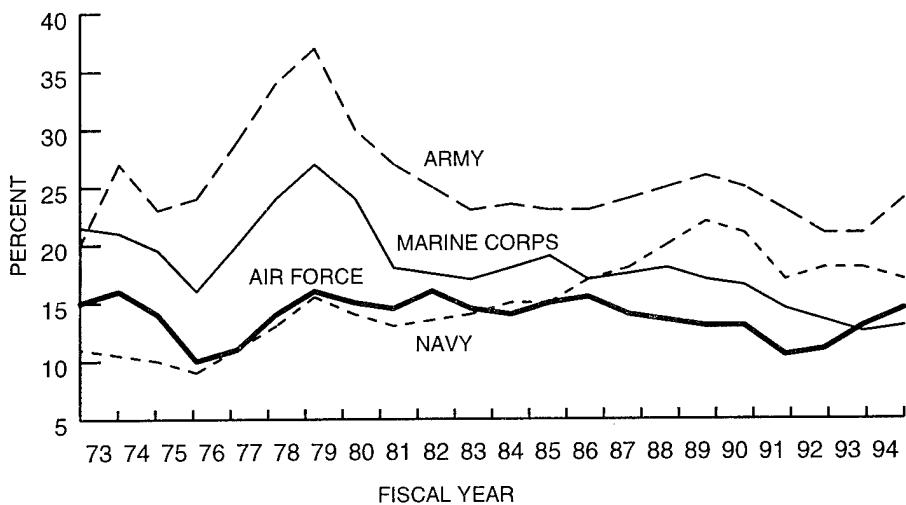


Source: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense/ Force Management and Personnel (OASD/FM&P)

Figure 1. Blacks as a Percentage of Total Force, by Service and Fiscal Year

Black and Hispanic representation in the military differs by service. In fiscal year 1991, the Army had the highest proportion of black enlisted members (32 percent), while the Air Force had the lowest (17 percent).¹² At 3.3 percent, Hispanics have remained slightly underrepresented in the Air Force enlisted force.¹³

The growth of blacks and Hispanics in the total force is partly due to their higher retention rates; their share of new accessions has remained relatively constant through the 1980s and has even decreased slightly in the last few years (fig. 2).



Source: Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense/Force Management and Personnel (OASD/FM&P)

Figure 2. Blacks as a Percentage of Accessions, by Service and Fiscal Year

Because of differing retention patterns, fewer blacks and Hispanics could be accessed than their presence in the qualified applicant pool might suggest, and the Air Force could still maintain parity between the numbers in the applicant pool and in the service. For example, Air Force personnel planners that project an accession force mix of 9.1 percent blacks and 5.6 percent Hispanics in 1995 will result in a steady-state force that mirrors the eligible pool of 11.3 percent blacks and 6.2 percent Hispanics.¹⁴ If a force precisely reflecting the demographic makeup of society were the goal, the Air Force could limit minority accessions. The fact is, neither the Air Force nor any of the other services has limited minority accessions in the all-volunteer force environment. This has contributed to the overrepresentation situation that has persisted since the early 1970s.

Overrepresentation and the Issue of Risk

Being a member of the armed forces is tantamount to putting one's life in the hands and service of the nation. The disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities in the military has been viewed as unfairly putting them in this risky, subservient role. This perception was born out of the Vietnam War experience.

United States draft practices during the Vietnam War had the effect of placing a disproportionately high number of blacks on the front lines where their 12 percent casualty rate between 1964 and 1974 drew national attention from black leaders even though "*in toto* [black casualties] were not disproportionate to the black percentage of the American population" or those of white soldiers.¹⁵ Conceptually, the draft was designed to equalize the burden of military service across society. However, "student draft deferments, along

with the decision not to ask for a declaration of war and not to mobilize our reserve forces, were part of a deliberate presidential policy not to arouse the passions of the American people.”¹⁶ Not only did this policy “contribute to antiwar militancy on college campuses”¹⁷ by creating a class of men who could protest the war behind the protection of their deferments, it resulted in the poor’s being overrepresented among draftees. Blacks were overrepresented in the draft not so much because of their race as because of their socioeconomic status.¹⁸

As today, recruits during the Vietnam War era were assigned to military specialties based, in part, on mental test scores. Persons from lower socioeconomic backgrounds tended to score more poorly on the entrance tests than those from more affluent backgrounds—which is still the case.¹⁹ “Almost as many young men were rejected on mental grounds as on physical ones,” but those who did qualify “were more likely to be channeled into ground combat forces than into branches that required technical aptitudes.”²⁰ Consequently, “blacks were overrepresented among casualties . . . because of socioeconomic rather than racial discrimination” reasons.²¹ The concern over a disproportionate number of blacks’ being placed in positions to die for their country resulted in racial tensions throughout the services, but became even more of an issue after the draft ended and the proportion of blacks in the military began to rise rapidly.²²

During the Desert Storm buildup to the Persian Gulf War, the issue of racial and ethnic minorities’ being placed unduly in harm’s way surfaced again. Black leaders like Jesse Jackson declared “our youth will burn first,”²³ even though the proportion of blacks and Hispanics who were assigned to combat-related units was consistent with that of nonminority service members.²⁴ One author argued the point this way: “These asymmetrical racial occupational policy arenas, combined with American military interventionist policy, would have the effect of a racially unequal, significantly greater impact in lives lost, leadership lost, and overall costs upon blacks in comparison to whites.”²⁵

Such arguments tended to get lost amidst the tremendous support of the American people to the war effort, the professional way the war was prosecuted, and the presence of various minorities in military leadership roles that had been dominated by whites during the Vietnam War period. The Gulf War was used as a political backdrop to make the point that US foreign-military policy “which positions the US as a world regulator, disproportionately jeopardizes the already perilous state of Black America.”²⁶ As a political issue, the cries of inequality tended to be from minority leaders and not the minority community at large.²⁷ Gen Colin Powell, Lt Gen Calvin Waller (deputy commander, Central Command), and most other minority servicemen and women voiced the same position as Sue E. Berryman, who said the “unequal burden [that results from overrepresentation] represents unfair burden only if peacetime enlistments do not represent voluntary and informed choice.”²⁸

Another side of the overrepresentation issue that emerged even before the Gulf War started was the disproportionate effect the force drawdown was

projected to have on minority members.²⁹ Despite assurances from the Department of Defense that during the force reductions there would be a conscious effort to “prepare the civilian work force for the next century [by providing] increased leadership opportunities for minorities and women,”³⁰ there were concerns that because blacks and Hispanics are overrepresented in the military, they would also feel the impact of the force reductions disproportionately.³¹ At this writing, there was little data to suggest this was the case.

Many senior leaders do not think numbers and percentages nor overrepresentation or underrepresentation should be the focus; the focus should be on doing what is in the best interest of the country. When asked how many minority officers the Air Force should be recruiting, Gen Henry Viccellio, commander of Air Education and Training Command (AETC), replied that more than the Air Force could get, and emphasized that attention should go to broadening military opportunities to minority members of society.³² This view of the military as an opportunity is shared by many, and its roots run back many years.

The Military as an Opportunity

The 1960s ushered in a series of domestic laws and programs aimed at increasing the employability of socioeconomically disadvantaged youth. A few included the Community Action Program, Job Corps, Neighborhood Youth Corps, Volunteers in Service to America (VISTA), Head Start, the Comprehensive Employment and Training Act, and the Job Training Partnership Act.³³ As the nation’s largest employer and an arm of a domestically oriented government, the military became a logical extension of these social programs. Military manpower policies began to reflect “trades among multiple stakeholders that have different objectives for the enlisted force.”³⁴ Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara’s “Project 100,000” is a good example.

Seeing that a significant portion of poor and disadvantaged youths failed to meet minimum enlistment standards, Secretary McNamara began in 1966 to allow persons scoring below the minimum 10th percentile on the Armed Forces Qualification Test to enter the military at a programmed rate. Because the individuals did not qualify for military service, they “presumably would likewise be unemployable or marginally employable in the civilian labor force.”³⁵ The success or failure of Project 100,000 is really an argument of whether the glass is half empty or half full—the inductees had higher training eliminations, more disciplinary actions, fewer promotions, and performed less proficiently than most other service members.³⁶ On the other hand, a significant number did complete training, stayed out of trouble, got promoted, performed satisfactorily, and retired after 20 or more years’ honorable service. In part because of valid points on both sides of the argument, Project 100,000 was one of the most heavily debated military manpower programs ever.³⁷

The military continued to advance its equal opportunity efforts rapidly and soon outpaced corporate America. The military environment became recog-

nized as one where advancement was based on merit. "Many young blacks perceive that they will get a better shake in the armed forces than in their own hometown," observed congressman, Rep John Conyers (D-Mich.).³⁸ President Bush said minorities were overrepresented in the US armed forces because "the military is the greatest equal opportunity employer around."³⁹ Army Sgt Lewis Davis put it this way: "The military is so far advanced [in equal opportunity and treatment] from the civilian population, it's pathetic."⁴⁰ Charles Moskos, sociologist and specialist on military affairs, referred to the military employment of blacks as a "success story."⁴¹ "No one is surprised that a black became chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff before a black became chief of a Fortune 500 corporation," noted Edwin Dorn, then of the Brookings Institute.⁴²

Despite this view, the military remains an instrument if not of social policy, then at least of social debate. Two factors are responsible for this: the enduring socioeconomic state of minorities in the country and shifts in the demographics of the American population.

Status of Minority Youth

Poverty in the black community has declined slightly over the last decade, but 31 percent of all blacks still remain below the economic poverty line.⁴³ Two in every three black youths between the ages of 16 and 19 are unemployed, compared to about one in two for whites.⁴⁴ More precisely, only 28 percent of black youths and 51 percent of Hispanic youths between 16 and 24 years of age, without high school diplomas, were employed in 1992. The numbers were much improved for those with high school diplomas: 55 percent and 68 percent, respectively, compared to 75 percent of whites.⁴⁵ John E. Jacob, president and chief executive officer (CEO) of the National Urban League, summed up the situation this way: "Clearly, America's long-range interests will be in jeopardy unless we better prepare disadvantaged and minority people, who will be the core of the future workforce, to compete in a modern economy characterized by international markets, advanced technology, and workforce requirements for high skill levels and for advanced interpersonal communication skills."⁴⁶

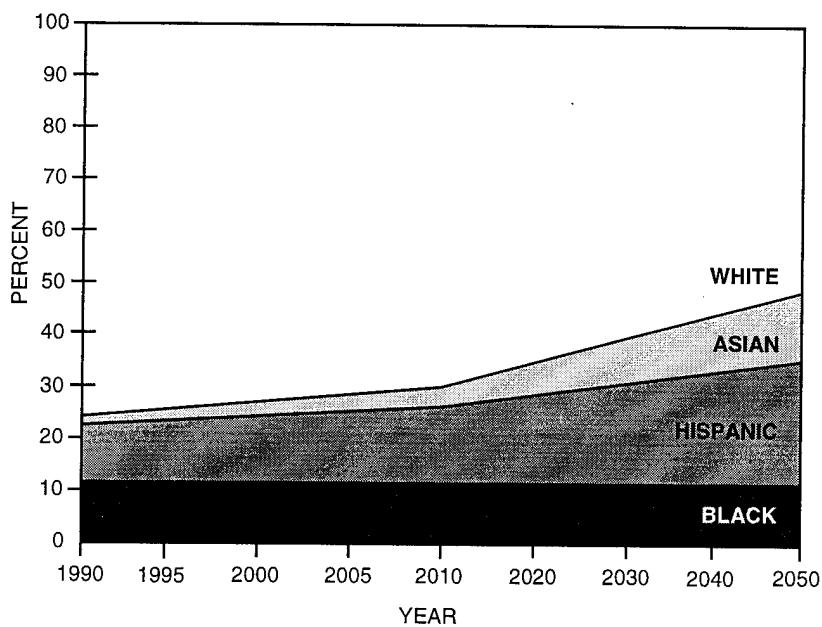
Although the military offers an environment of fair and equitable treatment, one must first be allowed to join the military before this can be experienced. Decreased manpower requirements and increased standards have made a "once wide-open job path for youths" far more narrow.⁴⁷ This is coupled with a decrease in the propensity of black youths to consider joining the military. Figure 2 reflects this leveling off in black accessions. This raises the question of whether the military should take steps to qualify and access minority members, using different criteria or procedures from those used for nonminority persons. But this raises equity issues and could open the same Pandora's box on "race norming" that the Department of Labor experienced with the General Aptitude Test Battery.⁴⁸ A discussion of how the Air Force sets its enlistment and job qualification standards will be addressed in chapter 5.

The Changing Youth Population

The population of the United States is projected to grow by 10.8 percent from 249 million people in 1990 to 276 million people by the turn of the century.⁴⁹ This growth will not occur uniformly across all segments of society; some demographic groups will change at a faster rate than others. Where these changes occur has a direct impact on Air Force recruiting.

For years, the "baby boomer" generation has captured America's attention. In addition to having a profound influence on American culture and social policy, this group, born in the 20 years following the end of World War II, gave birth to fewer children than previous generations. This fact contributed to a dramatic drop in the youth population from which the Air Force draws the majority of its recruits.⁵⁰ According to the US Census Bureau, the number of 18-to-21-year-olds peaked in 1980 at 17.4 million, will likely decline to 14 million in 1995, then begin to steadily grow toward 15.5 million by the turn of the century, continuing upward to over 18 million by the end of the first decade of the 21st century.⁵¹

There are several areas where changes in the population are projected to take place. First is in the proportion of racial minorities and individuals of Hispanic origin. As can be seen in figure 3, non-Hispanic whites will account for a smaller and smaller proportion of the population over the next half century, while the black representation will remain relatively constant over this period. The greatest growth rate will be seen in the proportion of Asian-Americans and Hispanics.



Source: US Bureau of Census, *Population Projections of the United States by Age, Sex, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1993-2050*, Report No. P25-1104, November 1993.

Figure 3. Population Shifts, 1990-2050

As might be expected, blacks and Hispanics will comprise an increasingly larger share of the 18-to-24-year-old population. Expanding their representation in the Air Force today will ensure there will be role models "to lead and mentor a more diverse" workforce in the future. Secretary of the Air Force Sheila E. Widnall describes the movement this way: "Diversity keeps an organization relevant. It raises quality. It establishes an institution as a player in public policy and the life of the nation. Diversity stimulates a range of views and options."⁵²

Summary

The military functions within the political environment of the country. As with most political issues, there are opposing views regarding the representation of blacks and Hispanics in the armed forces. This fact has made it a topic for debate for decades. Some view the service as contributing to the national well-being by providing jobs and opportunities for roughly 200,000 young people each year. For minorities in particular, the military offers socio-economic upward mobility and an environment of fair and equitable treatment that may not be available elsewhere. The high proportion of racial and ethnic minorities in the military and the continued efforts to recruit more are seen as being good for the country as a whole. On the other hand, the disproportionate number of racial and ethnic minorities in the service places them at greater physical risk while defending the nation than might be expected, given their representation in society. Those who set recruiting policy can expect this issue to continue to be debated as political winds cause shifts in Air Force manpower policies.

Notes

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18. Donald F. McHenry, "A Changing World Order: Implications for Black America," in *The State of Black America: 1991*, ed. Janet Dewart (New York: National Urban League, Inc., 1991), 159.
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20. David R. Segal, *Recruiting for Uncle Sam: Citizenship and Military Manpower Policy* (Lawrence, Kans.: University Press of Kansas, 1989), 35.
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Chapter 3

Air Force Recruiting Advertising

As discussed in chapter 1, one of the functions of recruiting is to increase the number of applicants. This process begins by increasing the interest of the target population. Advertising is the primary means for generating interest among persons the Air Force needs or desires to enlist. This chapter will briefly review the Air Force advertising process, highlight some of the actions taken to attract black and Hispanic persons, discuss funding of Air Force advertising, and present some data on the effectiveness of the advertising.

The Advertising Process

The Air Force contracts much of its advertising and promotional work with a national advertising agency specializing in personnel recruitment.¹ The agency acts as the principal consultant to the Air Force in developing advertising strategies and campaigns.² These efforts include the message the Air Force wants to get across to the public, the methods it will employ to do it, and the phasing of each advertisement's development and release. The Air Force's advertising theme may remain constant over several years, but the methods will frequently vary from year to year, depending on market conditions and advertising costs.³

The contracted advertising agency performs a number of other services for the Air Force besides helping develop advertising strategies and campaigns. For example, it provides marketing data on 17-to-24-year-olds, coordinates advertising spots on more than 5,200 radio and 1,200 television stations across the country, negotiates space and places ads in national magazines, and develops a variety of advertising products.⁴ One of the most important services the agency provides is expert advice and guidance on the types of messages that appeal to certain groups of people and the avenues that are most effective at getting the messages to them.

The message underlying Air Force advertising over the last several years has been that the Air Force is a "technology leader which offers unique education and training opportunities and a quality life-style."⁵ This message reveals much about the Air Force culture and is aimed at appealing to the interests and needs of persons who will easily assimilate into the Air Force and contribute effectively to the Air Force mission. The message contains the implication that the Air Force leads the nation and the world in the application of state-of-the-art technologies; its members are educated, well-trained,

and goal-oriented persons; and it is an organization that takes care of its people. This message is captured in the *Aim High—Air Force* theme. Additional messages that have received emphasis lately include “the Air Force values diversity” and “the Air Force is actively recruiting.”⁶

Based on a target audience analysis by Headquarters Recruiting Service and the advertising agency, specific advertisements may emphasize one or more parts of the basic messages described above.⁷ For example, the television commercial titled *Hot Rod* featured an F-16 to appeal to young people who like to be around high-tech equipment. It implied there is nothing more high-tech than Air Force jets. Advertising to attract medical doctors emphasizes issues of concern to them—availability of medical school funding, internships in state-of-the-art hospitals, and no malpractice insurance. There are many ads and brochures directed at persons who are concerned about furthering their education. These ads emphasize the learning and skill development that occur in formal Air Force training and on the job, and the programs available to help recruits obtain a college degree.⁸

In February 1994, the Air Force published and distributed a brochure titled *Know the Facts*. It included US Bureau of Labor statistics on the average salaries for a wide variety of civilian jobs with direct Air Force counterparts. The intent of the brochure was to encourage prospective recruits to consider the more challenging mechanical and electronic career areas where “some [Air Force] training and experiences are worth more than others” by providing them information on what they could expect to earn in the private sector whenever their service obligations or career aspirations had been met.⁹ This was an effort to put the Air Force career decision in the perspective of the applicant’s life goals and plans.¹⁰ All the Air Force’s advertising efforts are closely intertwined with the goal of increasing the representation of blacks and Hispanics among its membership.

Minority Advertising

The Air Force has made a concerted effort over the last several years to penetrate the minority market to attract more minorities, especially black and Hispanic persons.¹¹ Expenditures for minority advertising increased almost 90 percent from fiscal year 1990 to fiscal year 1992, but dropped by more than 25 percent when the recruiting budget was slashed the following year.¹²

Consistent with the trend in consumer advertising¹³ and with civilian marketing research literature advocating the use of minority role models in advertising in minority communities,¹⁴ the Air Force has increased the use of blacks and Hispanics in Air Force advertising brochures and television or radio commercials.¹⁵ It also has stepped up placement of ads in magazines read by minorities, release of radio spots on minority-owned radio stations, and mailing of information about Air Force opportunities directly to minority high school students.¹⁶ There are Spanish versions of most of the advertisements to facilitate advertising in the Hispanic community.

As previously discussed, the Air Force carefully considers the audience when developing advertisements for a particular group. This is especially true in its minority advertising efforts. For example, a recent ad in *Jet* magazine began, "You need a job? The Air Force has jobs,"¹⁷ while in *Young Sisters and Brothers* magazine, an Air Force recruiting ad featuring Gen "Chappie" James, Jr., said, "Hard work and talent pay off . . . we have opportunities for qualified people who share the same ideals."¹⁸ These two ads were aimed at appealing to the young black population where unemployment is high and positive role models are influential.¹⁹

In 1992 the Air Force's "Legacy of Leadership" poster series depicting black military heroes was distributed to recruiting offices and high schools across the country to increase patriotism and provide positive examples for young black students to emulate.²⁰ An ad titled "Adelante" featuring Hispanic Air Force members was placed in a number of Hispanic publications to inspire Hispanic youth to set high goals for themselves, continue their education, and consider the Air Force as an avenue to achieving success.²¹

These examples may sound straightforward, but it is difficult to develop advertising that is perceived favorably by everyone within a specific ethnic or minority group. A brochure featuring all-black personnel was felt to give a false impression that there is "more than one Air Force," a white one and a black one, and it "offended some majority members,"²² although the intent was for the brochure to be used only in one-on-one situations at the discretion of individual recruiting counselors and not to be distributed in mass.²³ Similarly, a news release which began, "Are you of African-American, Hispanic, or American Indian origin?" was thought to couch the Air Force in a "free food stamps and more welfare money hand-outs" role.²⁴ These reactions serve as reminders that in developing Air Force recruiting messages and materials, the perspective of the receiver is very important.

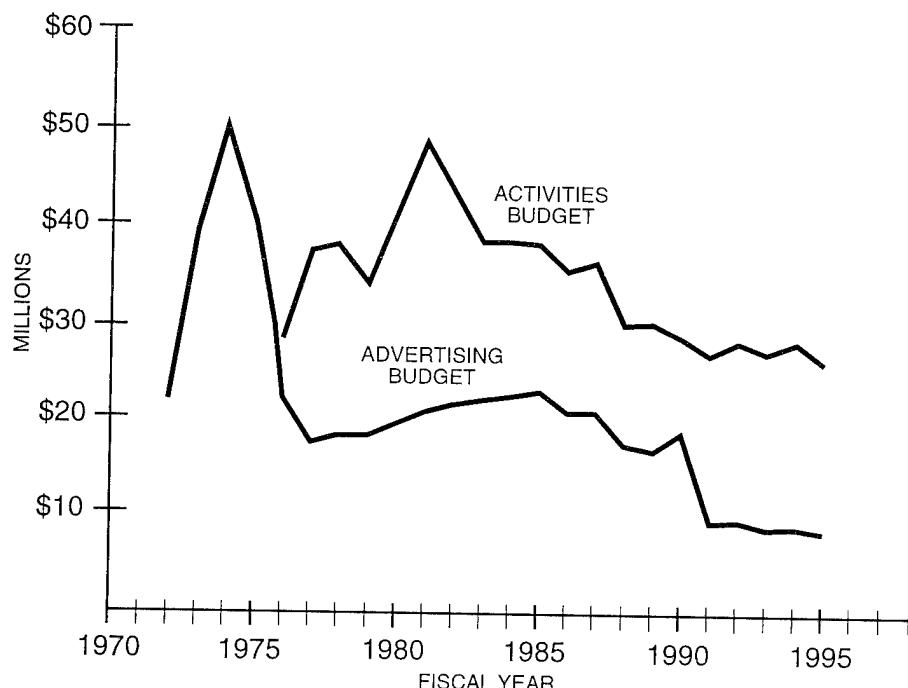
After working minority markets for years, Chief Master Sergeant Jimmy Brown, senior recruiter for the 369th Recruiting Squadron, observed that what young people are looking for differs little between minority and nonminority members, but that the delivery is very important. He suggests that minority recruiters may meet with more success recruiting in minority markets than do nonminority members because they are able to identify with and be accepted into the minority community.²⁵ Appropriately staffing recruiting offices and putting minority recruiting literature and advertisements in the hands of the recruiters is constrained by another pressing concern in Air Force: funding.

Funding

The Air Force advertising budget seems large at first glance—\$8 million for fiscal year 1994.²⁶ However, advertising is extremely expensive and the money does not go very far. An ad appearing three times in *Jet* or *Ebony* magazine alone costs around \$37,000.²⁷ Listings for specialized mailouts,

such as those to doctors with certain skills, can cost from \$40 to \$100 for 1,000 names and addresses.²⁸ Cost constraints forced the Air Force to discontinue paid radio and television advertising in January 1990. The Air Force continued to produce radio and television commercials but depended on the stations to air them as a public service.²⁹ Although some monies were made available to begin purchasing radio airtime in 1994, the Air Force is still heavily dependent upon the goodwill of the stations to air the commercials.

The costs of advertising continue to rise but the Air Force budget allotted advertising keeps declining along with the entire recruiting budget. In fiscal year 1993, the Air Force's recruiting advertising funds were less than 20 percent of the Army's funds.³⁰ As illustrated in figure 4, the approximately \$8 million allocated to advertising in fiscal year 1994 is only about 20 percent of what was available in 1974, when compared in constant 1994 dollars. Two reasons for the funding cuts are direct reductions in the Air Force budget and the belief that the Air Force can advertise less since it is recruiting only about half as many people as it was a decade ago.³¹



Source: Headquarters United States Air Force Recruiting Service, Recruiting Service Operations Analysis Branch (Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA)

Figure 4. Recruiting Activity and Advertising Budgets in 1994 Dollars

Most major advertising campaigns requiring large outlays of money or very specialized skills, such as video production or graphics design, is done at Headquarters Recruiting Service or through contracts monitored by the headquarters.³² However, the recruiting squadrons located throughout the country

control a large share of the recruiting advertising budget—they are allotted approximately 41 percent of the advertising budget with an additional 26 percent going toward sales materials in direct support of the recruiting squadron missions.³³

Decentralized funding provides commanders and recruiting personnel flexibility to tailor advertising to the unique situations in their region. They are able to employ a variety of tactics to increase awareness about Air Force opportunities and seem constrained only by their own ingenuity and the resources available.³⁴ Recruiting advertising actions taken at the local level include everything from placing Air Force ads on restaurant menus to sponsoring “center of influence” activities, such as a pizza meal for prospective recruits. This personalized approach to Air Force advertising is particularly important when recruiting in minority markets where high-caliber candidates are bombarded with other offers besides joining the Air Force.³⁵ These actions are necessary if the Air Force’s advertising efforts are to be effective.

Advertising Effectiveness

The primary intent of Air Force advertising is to generate interest in the target population of 17-to-24-year-olds. One indicator of interest is leads. Leads are requests for information directed to the Air Force by prospective recruits. They may come in the form of telephone calls, mail-in cards, or any number of other ways.

Lead Processing

Between 1 October 1992 and 30 July 1993, more than 123,000 inquiries about the Air Force were funneled through the Air Force Opportunity Center in Capitol Heights, Maryland.³⁶ This included almost 4,000 inquiries generated by joint service advertising—the Army-Navy-Air Force-Marines ads sponsored by the Department of Defense. Previously, two firms were contracted by the Air Force to sort the calls and cards by zip code and forward the data to Headquarters Recruiting Service where each lead was routed to the recruiting office with responsibility for the area where the lead originated.³⁷ This manually intensive process took time and resulted in many problems. For example, “as of 5 August 1993, there were over 4,700 leads [from that year] whose zip codes were not claimed by any squadron.”³⁸ This meant 4,700 persons probably did not get the response from the Air Force they expected and deserved. Some of the people may have made other attempts to contact the Air Force, but many would have given up completely. As a result, the Air Force instituted a new telephone switching process whereby calls are automatically routed to the local recruiter based on the point of origin of the call. However, a few problems still need to be addressed in the lead generation process.

The current lead generation and processing system places little to no real accountability at the recruiting office level. Individual recruiters are fre-

quently tempted to "pencil whip" the lead referral documentation to balance their books each month, whether or not they contacted the person or even made a serious effort to do so.³⁹ It also does not incorporate leads from all sources into one clear picture of how contacts are made and followed up with prospective recruits.⁴⁰ Leads generated through walk-ins, calls directly to the local recruiter, or contacts made at conventions are not combined with those from the national lead referral system (the 1-800 telephone calls and mail-in cards). As a result, some people are contacted numerous times while others completely "fall through the cracks." In addition to being the courteous thing to do, it is important to follow up and track all lead sources as a means of evaluating the effectiveness of the Air Force advertising and promotions program.

When it comes to linking leads to specific Air Force advertising or recruiting efforts, experience has found it difficult, if not impossible, to do.⁴¹ The cause-and-effect relationship is not clear-cut. A single advertisement in 1,000 copies of a magazine may generate only five or six leads that can be directly tied back to the ad via a coded mail-in card or specific 1-800 number.⁴² Was the ad effective? The answer may be imbedded in the concept of "reach and frequency."

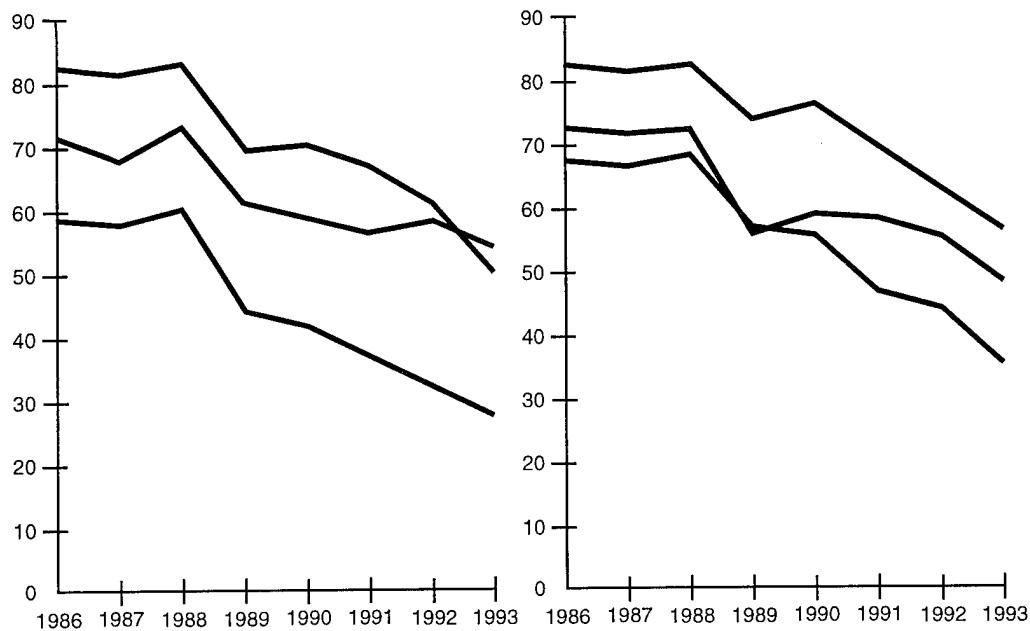
Reach and Frequency

When people are exposed to a message in a variety of ways over time, it increases their awareness of the product. National soft drink companies purchase advertising on billboards, in magazines, on the television and radio, and place their logo on a wide variety of consumer items to keep their product in the forefront of consumers' minds. This is referred to as the "reach and frequency" of advertising—any people in a target audience are predicted to come in contact with the message and how often the contact occurs.⁴³ In the recruiting arena, reach and frequency creates increased interest in a company as a potential employer. Building interest in this way does not occur overnight; it is usually a long-term process of advertising.

The Air Force plans its advertising campaigns with reach and frequency in mind. Analysts with the Air Force's advertising agency rely on marketing research and ad exposure data when building an ad campaign. The Air Force goal is to contact at least 50 percent of high school seniors eight times during the year.⁴⁴

Reduced advertising funding translates into less information about the Air Force in the hands and minds of potential recruits. One study involving more than 600 17-to-24-year-old blacks from across the country found only 43 percent had seen an Air Force ad, while 76 percent had seen one for the Army.⁴⁵ Even among new Air Force recruits, there has been a continual downward trend in the number who have seen or received a piece of Air Force advertising. Does this matter? Figure 5 shows this decline in advertising reach from 1986 to 1993. Over this same period, American youth expressed a declining interest in serving in the military, dropping from 17 percent in 1987 to 11 percent in 1993.⁴⁶

Although one cannot infer a cause-and-effect relationship, the data does compel one to conclude that reduced advertising funding leads to reduced



Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 5. Recruits Recalling Seeing/Hearing Air Force-Specific Advertising

contact with the target population, and this, in turn, results in a reduced propensity to consider joining the Air Force. Since drawing this conclusion seems reasonable, albeit speculative, the Air Force turns to recruits themselves to help in assessing the effectiveness of its advertising.

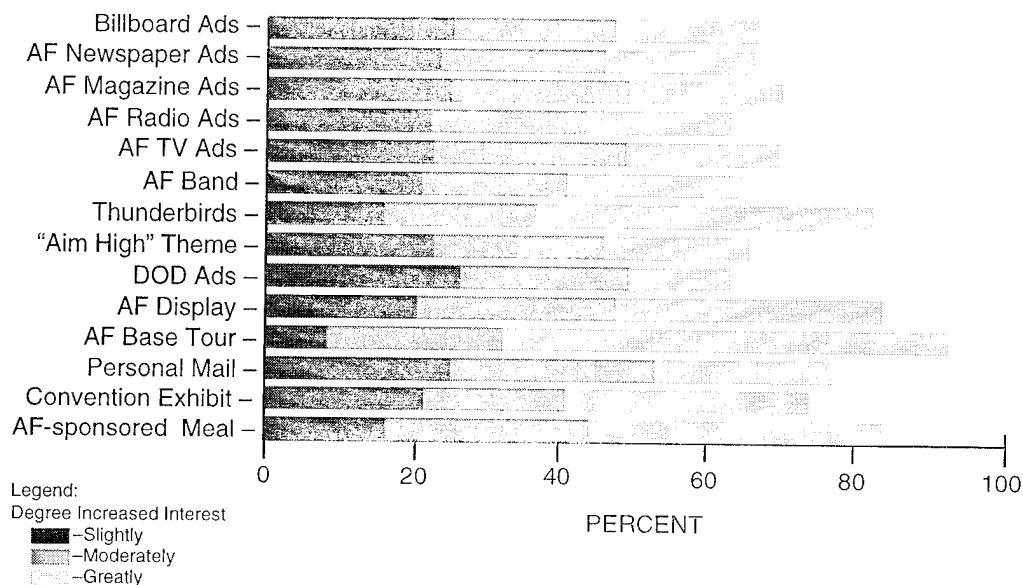
Recruit Assessments

As mentioned previously, Air Force advertising begins with an understanding of the target audience and the form of advertising most likely to be effective with them. Data on the motivations and characteristics of recruits will be covered in the next chapter. Reported here are merely their evaluations and comments regarding the Air Force advertising and recruiting effort.⁷

Twenty-seven percent of the airmen did not recall seeing or hearing any Air Force-specific advertising. This undoubtedly reflects the downward spiral in the advertising and promotions budget for the last several years. Most of the recruits who did encounter Air Force advertising said they remembered first encountering it via the television (34 percent) or on a billboard (19 percent). (Recall that the television commercials are aired as a public service.) In line with the notion of reach and frequency, 27 percent of those who had seen Air Force advertising could not specify through which medium they had first seen or heard the advertising—they just knew they had. Most (86 percent) had seen or heard the Air Force “Aim High” theme. At some point, 56 percent had seen an Air Force-specific television commercial, magazine ad (51 percent),

billboard (48 percent), film about the Air Force (29 percent), and/or newspaper advertisement (28 percent), or had heard a radio commercial (35 percent).

The real measure of success is not just whether the advertisements were seen or heard, but whether they raised the recruits' interest levels. On average, these forms of advertising increased interest in about two-thirds of the people who saw or heard them (fig. 6).



Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 6. Advertising Effects on Interest in the Air Force

Included in figure 6 are assessments of other forms of Air Force "advertising." For the 18 percent who received an opportunity to participate in them, recruiter-arranged base tours greatly increased the interest of 61 percent of the recruits and slightly or moderately increased it for 33 percent more. The Air Force Thunderbird aerial demonstration team was seen by 39 percent of the survey respondents, and 83 percent of them found it increased their interest in the Air Force. So did Air Force displays (83 percent) and Air Force-sponsored "center of influence" meals (84 percent). Half (54 percent) of the recruits had received personally addressed mail from the Air Force, and 76 percent said it had increased their interest in joining. Although 28 percent could not remember the advertising completely enough to answer about its believability, 92 percent of the remainder of the recruits said the Air Force-specific advertisements were believable. Overall, the Air Force advertising program seems to be effective. Information is getting out and seems to be having an influence. Although recruiters are encouraged to initiate contact with candidates, most of the recruits said their first contact with the recruiter was when they visited the recruiters' offices (41 percent) or called the recruiter themselves (33 percent). This was true independent of the recruit's

race or ethnicity. More personal initial involvement by the recruiter may be needed to truly penetrate the minority market. Nevertheless, Air Force advertising seems to have contributed to the recruiting process by increasing interest in the target populations.

Summary

Advertising plays a critical role in the recruiting process. The Air Force has taken many steps to use advertising to enhance recruiting in minority communities, specifically to attract more black and Hispanic persons. While it is difficult to tie any particular form of advertising directly to improved enlistment rates and quality of applicants, the data suggest that decreased funding over the years has resulted in fewer Air Force advertisements' being seen or heard by prospective recruits, and this may have contributed to a steady decline in interest among America's youth in serving in the military. Air Force recruiting policy makers must continue to be on guard to threats to the advertising budget as these, combined with declining interest among the minority populations in joining the military, threaten the Air Force's minority recruiting efforts.

Notes

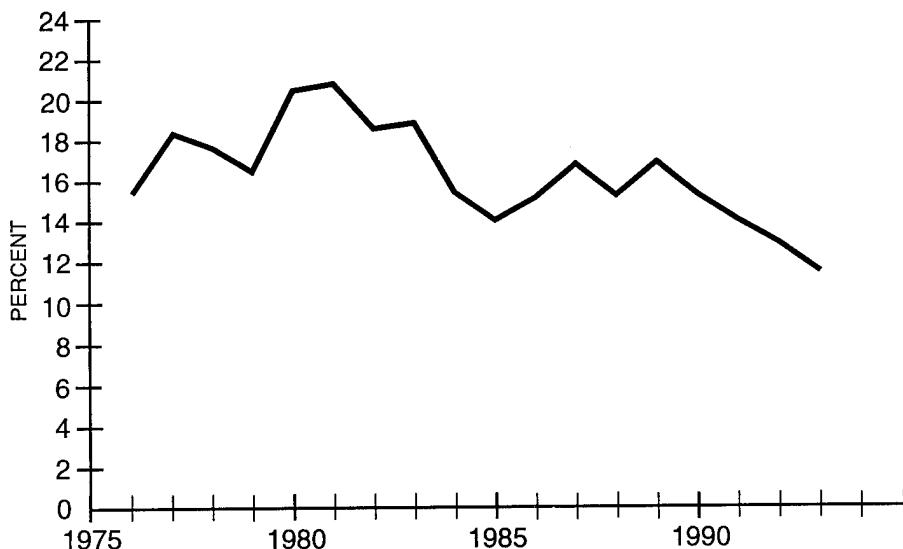
1. For the past eight years, the Air Force has contracted its advertising needs with Bozell, Inc. (Dallas), a subsidiary of Bozell, Jacobs, Kenyon and Eckhardt, Inc. (New York). This contract is reviewed on an annual basis.
2. Tim Talbert, Headquarters United States Air Force Recruiting Service, Advertising Division, Randolph AFB, Tex., personal interview with author, 11 August 1993.
3. Ibid.
4. Background Paper, Tim Talbert, Headquarters Recruiting Service, RSAA, Randolph AFB, Tex., subject: How We Use an Advertising Agency, 5 August 1993.
5. Talking Paper, Capt Chester Curtis, Headquarters Recruiting Service, RSAAAE, Randolph AFB, Tex., subject: Air Force Advertising Targeted toward Minorities, 18 May 1993.
6. Dr Sheila E. Widnall, secretary of the Air Force, address to the 1993 Worldwide Public Affairs Workshop, Andrews AFB, Md., 16 November 1993.
7. Talbert interview.
8. For example, see the trifold brochure, *Are You on the Right Path?*, NPS 93-040.
9. Headquarters Recruiting Service recruiting brochure, *Know the Facts*, NPS 94-051.
10. Lieutenant Colonel Schiefer, Headquarters Recruiting Service, Analysis Division, Randolph AFB, Tex., interview with author, 24 February 1994.
11. Talking Paper, Col Henry J. Williams, Headquarters Recruiting Service, RSOM, Randolph AFB, Tex., subject: Minority Recruiting, 23 October 1992.
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17. Air Force recruiting ad, *Jet*, 24 August 1992, inside back cover.
18. Air Force recruiting ad, *Young Sisters and Brothers*, February 1993, 7.
19. "The Battle for Respect: Desert Storm Won the Military New Stature as an Institution of Opportunity for American Blacks," *Newsweek*, 11 March 1991, 54-55.
20. Talking Paper, Maj Denise Travers, Headquarters USAF, DPXFA, Pentagon, Washington, D.C., subject: Air Force Minority Officer Accessions, 7 January 1994.
21. Talbert interview.
22. Briefing, Maj Sarah A. Beavers, to Minority Officer Accession Process Action Team meeting, Randolph AFB, Tex., 21 May 1993.
23. Minutes, 21 May 1993 Minority Officer Accession Process Action Team (PAT) meeting, Randolph AFB, Tex., 14 June 1993, 3.
24. Ibid.
25. CMSgt Jimmy Brown, Headquarters Recruiting Service, Directorate of Operations, Randolph AFB, Tex., interview with author, 19 July 1993.
26. Briefing, Brig Gen John M. McBroom, Headquarters Recruiting Service commander, to Lt Gen Robert M. Alexander, deputy assistant secretary of defense for military manpower and personnel policy, subject: Recruiting Service Status Report, undated.
27. Proceedings of the 26-27 January 1993 meeting of the Minority Officer Accession Working Group, Randolph AFB, Tex., Headquarters USAF/DPXO, 23 March 1993, 6.
28. Kerry Macaitis, Headquarters Recruiting Service, Advertising Branch, Randolph AFB, Tex., interview with author, 11 August 1993.
29. Lt Col Robert Cheeseman, Headquarters Recruiting Service, Advertising and Promotion Directorate, Randolph AFB, Tex., interview with author, 12 August 1993.
30. Ibid.
31. Lt Col Mike Schiefer, Headquarters Recruiting Service, Analysis Division, Randolph AFB, Tex., interview with author, 12 August 1993.
32. Talbert interview.
33. McBroom briefing.
34. Talking Paper, TSgt Greg Hiti, Headquarters Recruiting Service, RSAAAL, Randolph AFB, Tex., subject: Local Advertising (undated).
35. Brown interview.
36. Macaitis interview.
37. Talking Paper, Ms Kerry Macaitis, Headquarters Recruiting Service, RSAAAE, Randolph AFB, Tex., 5 August 1993.
38. Ibid.
39. SMSgt Ed Hoffer, Headquarters Recruiting Service, Production Analysis Branch, Randolph AFB, Tex., interview with author, 23 February 1994.
40. Schiefer interview, 24 February 1994.
41. Minority Officer Accession PAT meeting minutes, 3; Cheeseman interview; and Talbert interview.
42. Macaitis interview.
43. Talbert interview.
44. Cheeseman interview.
45. J.R.H. Marketing Services, Inc., "USAF Minority Recruiting Study (Enlistment Motivations of Young Blacks to Join the Air Force), Phase II," JRH #2274-91N, February 1992, 31.
46. Based on Headquarters Recruiting Service analyses using "Youth Attitude Tracking Study" statistics.
47. Data reported here and in chapter 4 are based on surveys administered by Headquarters USAF Recruiting Service to approximately 10 percent of all recruits attending basic military training (BMT) at Lackland AFB, Texas. Two forms of surveys are used: one covers recruiting programs and actions; the other emphasizes the Air Force advertising campaign. About 40 percent of the questions are the same on the two surveys. The survey data are collected twice a month from a representative sample of airmen; participation is voluntary, but few decline. In fiscal year 1993, there were 3,155 surveys administered. The survey takes about an hour to complete.

Chapter 4

The Decision to Join

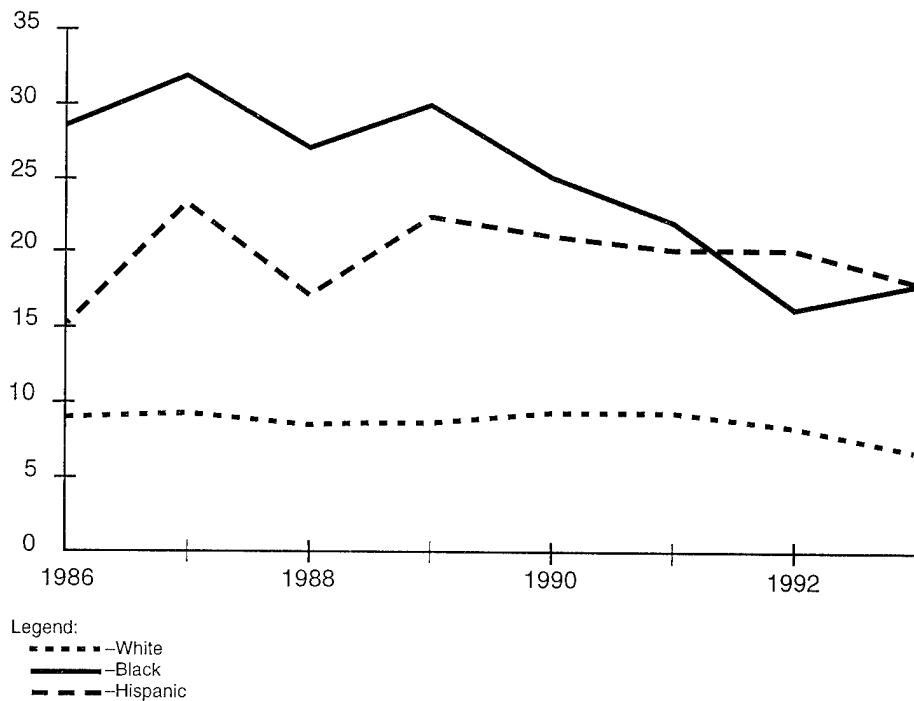
Millions of teenagers are technically qualified to join the Air Force, yet only a fraction actually enlist. Interest in joining the Air Force has been on a gradual downward trend for the last decade. The propensity of 16-to-21-year-old males to consider the military as a career choice has dropped five percentage points since 1986; propensities to consider specifically the Air Force peaked at 20 percent in 1981 and had dropped to less than 12 percent by 1993 (fig. 7).¹ This downward trend is especially prevalent among blacks (fig. 8). One reason for this trend may be a perception held by young people, their parents, school counselors, and others "that a military career is not as secure as it once was, or that we [the services] are no longer hiring."² In response to the downturn, senior Air Force leaders are taking every opportunity to put out the word that "the Air Force is actively recruiting."³



Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 7. Interest in Joining the Air Force: 16-to-21-Year-Old Males

Answers to the question of why individuals join the Air Force is paramount to recruiting. The way the Air Force markets itself, to whom, and through what means hinges on attracting the high-caliber person who generally has



Source: Headquarters USAF Recruiting Service, Analysis Division, Randolph AFB, Texas. Based on Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) Data, 1993.

Figure 8. Interest in Joining the Military: 16-to-21-Year-Old Males

options other than joining the Air Force for a minimum of four years. Recruiters must know what kind of people the Air Force needs, but they must also understand what potential enlistees are looking for and how they decide the Air Force is for them. In this chapter, a simple model for understanding the decision-making process is proposed and is used as a framework to discuss why and how individuals decide to join the Air Force. Survey data collected from Air Force basic military training attendees is used as supporting material and to gain insight into the issue.

The Decision-making Process

There is as wide a variety of reasons for joining the Air Force as there are men and women in uniform. Many members can state exactly why they chose the Air Force rather than one of the other services or instead of pursuing endeavors in the civilian sector. Others find it more difficult to express what sparked them to join. This paper contends that both groups of people were involved in the same basic decision-making process. Quite simply, each person, using his or her own set of criteria, evaluated enlistment in the Air Force and the alternatives to it and chose the option appearing to have the greatest personal payoff. In the opinion of the author, there are four major factors that affect one's decision-making process (fig. 9).

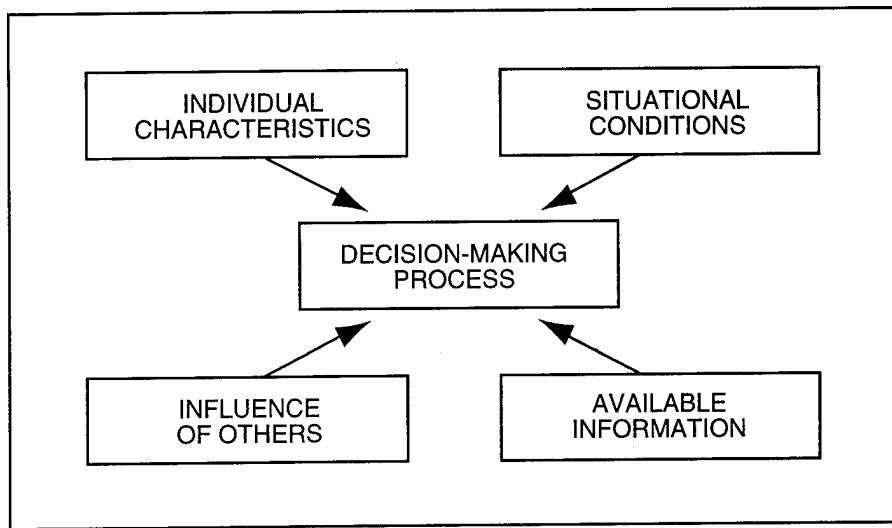


Figure 9. Factors Influencing the Decision-making Process

Individual Characteristics

The first major factor is the collection of individual attributes that characterize each person—his or her own set of interests, beliefs, values, aspirations, experiences, knowledge, and skills. These come into play in a number of ways. They form the basis for the goals individuals set for themselves and the activities they engage in to achieve those goals. They affect the criteria selected to evaluate alternatives and the value associated with each criterion. They act as a guide for judging whether something is deemed positive or negative about an alternative. Finally, they affect the manner in which one uses information

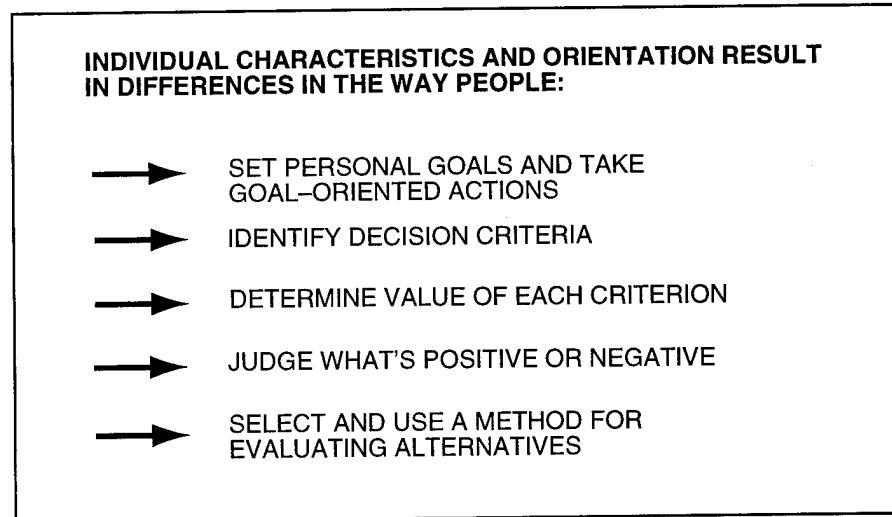


Figure 10. Five Ways Individual Characteristics Affect Decision Making

about each alternative to reach a decision. The information that is available forms the second major factor affecting one's decision-making process.

Available Information

Decisions involve weighing and comparing pieces of information. Better information generally leads to better decisions. Sometimes one has a lot of information about each alternative; other times there is very little to go on. Modern computer and satellite technology is oriented toward processing more and more information to facilitate decision making. Most decisions involve inferences about cause-and-effect relationships—if one does “A,” then “B” will occur. Advertising, including the Air Force effort discussed in the previous chapter, is aimed at putting information into the hands of those who will use it to make decisions. Advertisements frequently include data on cause-and-effect relationships and comparisons of the advertiser's product to the product of competitors. In this sense, advertising reflects someone's attempt to influence another person's decision-making process by controlling information or putting it in different perspectives. This leads to the third major factor in the model—other people.

Influence of Others

The advice and even the consent of others is frequently sought (and more frequently given) when one is confronted with a decision. One's own character affects whose advice is valued. The background, personality, and experiences of the other people affect the advice they give. Others have their own notions of what is or is not important and what cause-and-effect relationships exist. On the other hand, they are often helpful when it comes to interpreting the sometimes confusing and many times overwhelming amount of information that is involved in making a decision. They may help put the decision in context of the last factor—the situation.

Situational Conditions

The final major factors important to decision making are situational, or environmental, conditions. These include things outside the individual, *per se*, that affect the decisions he or she makes. Examples include whether a person is engaged or married, possesses special talents and skills, or has parents, children, or others who require special care. Two other significant factors relevant to employment decisions are the state of the economy and one's own projected employability.

Each of these four basic factors has a role in affecting an individual's decision-making process. They also provide a framework for helping understand why individuals join the Air Force and how they go about deciding to do so. Although joining the Air Force is an individual decision, there are several common themes that emerge when applying this model to the enlistment decision-making process. These themes can have implications for recruiting in general and recruiting minority members in particular.

Basic Military Trainee Perspectives on the Decision to Join the Air Force

Since 1976 the Air Force has systematically surveyed airmen attending basic military training (BMT) at Lackland AFB, Texas, to develop profiles of enlistees entering the Air Force and to determine the influence various recruiting policies and practices have on enlistment decisions.⁴ The data yield a wealth of information, only a portion of which is reported here. Unless otherwise specified, the findings discussed below are based on the fiscal year (FY) 1993 survey data collected from over 3,100 recruits.

Demographics

In FY 1993, approximately 11.5 percent of non-prior service Air Force enlistees were black, 3.3 percent were Hispanic, and the remainder were white and other racial and ethnic mixes. The majority were single (86 percent) and male (78 percent). About 80 percent scored at or above the 50th percentile on the AFQT. A little over half (54 percent) of the airmen were from communities of under 50,000 people, but this varied greatly by race. For the last decade, black and Hispanic airmen have consistently come from large metropolitan areas. In FY 1993, 59 percent of blacks and 52 percent of Hispanics were from towns with more than 100,000 people.

Interests and Activities

Most of the airmen said they enjoyed activities with parallels in today's Air Force work environments. The majority said they liked to work as a member of a team (86 percent), participate in team sports (84 percent), work with computers (64 percent), read (50 percent), and build things (66 percent). Blacks and Hispanics tended to agree more strongly with the first four statements than did whites. Sixty-three percent of the blacks and 56 percent of the Hispanics also said they enjoyed working in an office environment, while only 38 percent of the white airmen felt this way.

Educational Aspirations

The number of airmen aspiring to high education goals has increased each year. The vast majority of new recruits hoped to complete a bachelor's degree or higher, with a few more blacks (95 percent) and Hispanics (96 percent) voicing this as a personal goal than whites (89 percent). Eighty percent had already enrolled in the Montgomery G.I. Bill program at the time of the survey.⁵

Preenlistment Status

Between 35 and 40 percent of persons who joined the Air Force in the last three years were working full-time or part-time when they applied for enlistment; just under one-third were in high school. Another 20 to 25 percent were

enrolled in college or vocational training, while a similar number had attended some form of post-high-school educational institution, but were not enrolled at the time they enlisted.

Available Information

Data on the reach and influence of various forms of Air Force advertising were presented in chapter 3. However, one additional note is worth making in regard to the information made available to the recruits during enlistment processing. While 92 percent of the airmen said Air Force advertising was believable, only 43 percent felt their recruiter provided accurate information about basic military training.

Influence of Others

Other people can influence one's decision to join. Following is a list of some who may influence the decision of a potential recruit.

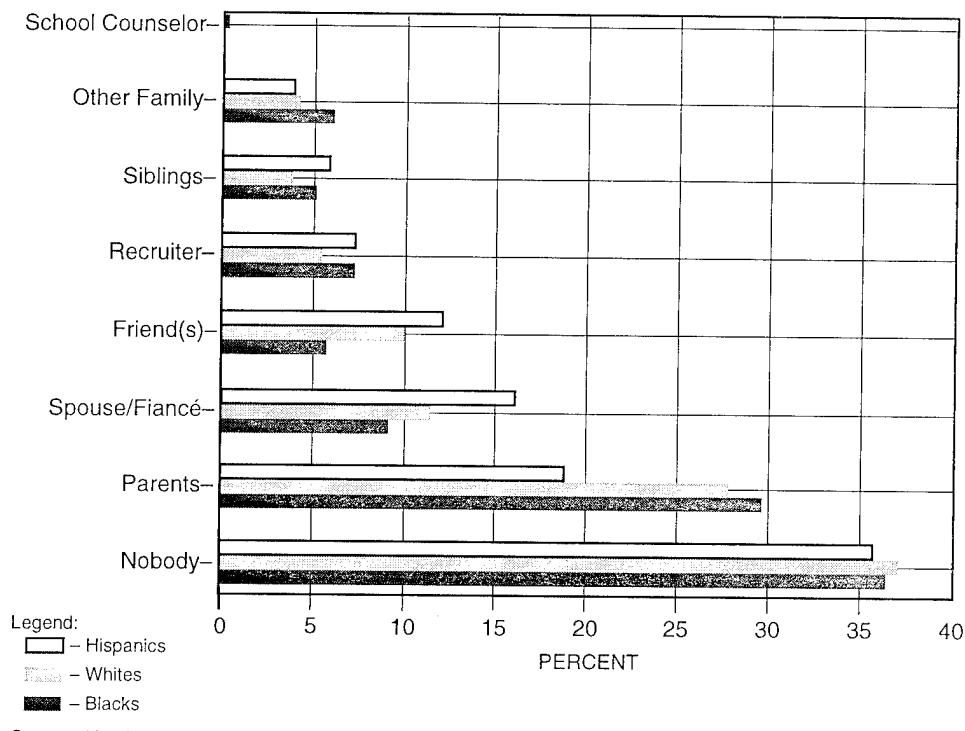


Figure 11. People Identified as Most Influential in Decision to Join

Family Military Association. The majority of the airmen had some family member(s) affiliated with the military. Most of the airmen said that their fathers (including stepfathers or guardians) had served on active duty (62 percent), although this was less likely to be the case for fathers of black and Hispanic recruits; those figures were 51 percent and 50 percent, respectively.

Six percent of the recruits had a father still on active duty; 19 percent had a father who had retired from the military. Only 4 percent had mothers (including stepmothers or guardians) who had served on active duty. A quarter had a brother or sister who had served or was serving in a branch of the armed forces.

Parents. Before joining the Air Force, nine out of 10 airmen discussed the decision with their mothers (90 percent) and/or fathers (83 percent). When they were consulted, fathers were more apt to encourage their sons and daughters to join the Air Force (72 percent) than were mothers (67 percent). Fewer than five percent of the parents actually discouraged their children from joining. Not unexpectedly, parents were singled out as the people having the greatest influence on a recruit's decision to join the Air Force. Blacks, in particular, tended to identify their parents as having the most influence on their decision (30 percent). This is consistent with a Harris poll of young children that found 75 percent trusted their parents "a great deal" (although 44 percent said they did not trust advertisers at all!).⁶

Spouses/Fiancés. Not many of the airmen were married or engaged; however, of those who were, 12 percent said their spouses or fiancés tried to discourage them from enlisting in the Air Force. This has been a fairly consistent finding over the last five years, with few differences between blacks, whites, and Hispanics.

Siblings. Almost a quarter of the airmen with siblings did not discuss with them the decision to join. Those who did found their brothers and sisters supportive (58 percent) or neutral (35 percent). Among all airmen, 12 percent said their siblings were the most influential people in their decision to join the Air Force.

Recruiters. Virtually every person who enlists in the military does so through a recruiter. Many of the enlistees discussed their plans with recruiters in more than one service. Just under half of the airmen attending BMT had had some contact with one or more recruiters in the Army (46 percent), Navy (35 percent), or Marines (31 percent). As mentioned in chapter 3, most of the time the airmen contacted the Air Force recruiter rather than the other way around. As the Air Force's frontline representatives, it is important the Air Force recruiters make a good impression on potential recruits. The airmen rated their Air Force recruiters' military bearing as excellent (43 percent) or good (41 percent) and judged their recruiters to be knowledgeable (77 percent), cooperative and friendly (92 percent), and sincerely interested in helping the recruit make the right career decision (76 percent). However, only 6 percent of the airmen said their recruiters had the most influence on their decision to join the Air Force.

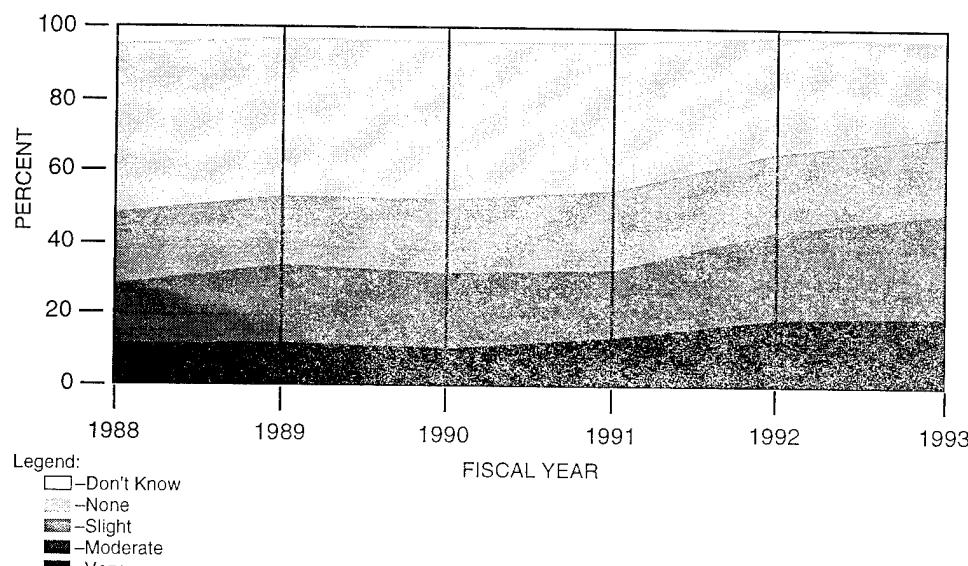
Others. High school counselors were not consulted most of the time, presumably because so many of the recruits were already out of school. Sixty-one percent of the high school counselors who were consulted supported and even encouraged joining the Air Force. This was slightly more true for Hispanics (77 percent) than for the white (62 percent) or black (55 percent) airmen. In two-thirds of the cases where a friend or relative was an Air Force member,

the airmen said that person had encouraged them to join the Air Force. Friends, school counselors, or family members (other than those discussed above) were the most influential people in the decision-making process for 14 percent of the airmen.

It is interesting to note that while there were many people providing input to the recruits during the decision-making process, 38 percent of them said none of the individuals listed had had an influence on their personal decision to join the Air Force.

Situational Conditions

The state of the economy directly and indirectly influences career decisions like joining the Air Force. The importance of the economy to the decision to join has steadily increased over the last four years (fig. 12). Twenty-one percent of the airmen said the economy had a "very strong" influence on their decision to join and another 23 percent said it had a "moderately strong" influence on them. Just under one-third said it had not influenced them at all. This breakout was fairly consistent across blacks, whites, and Hispanics.



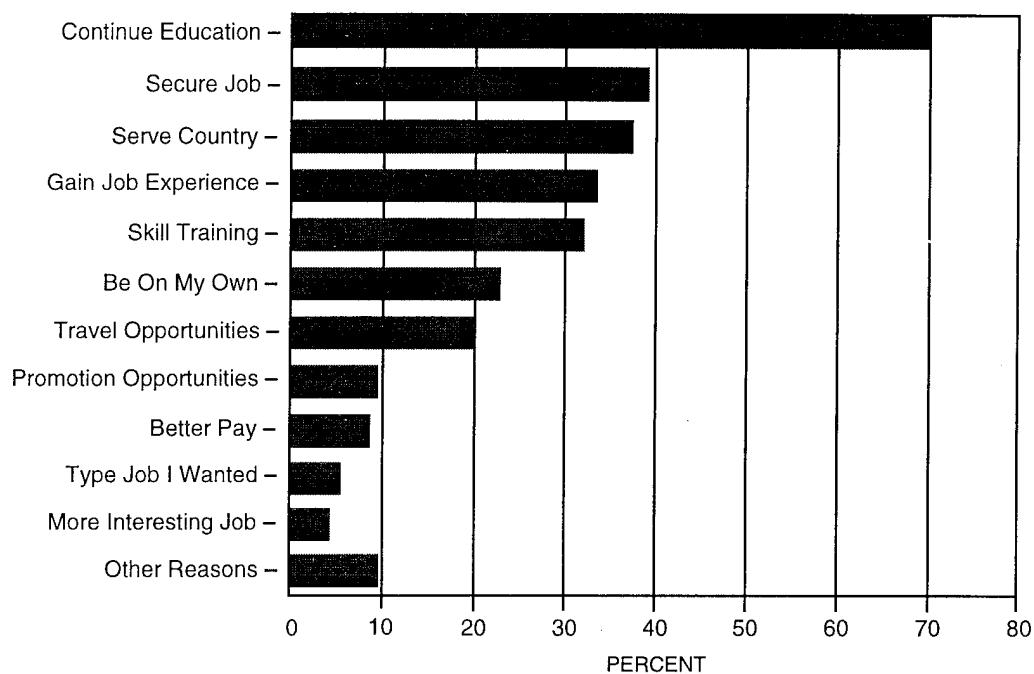
Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 12. Influence of State of Economy on Decision to Join

Timing. Sixty percent of the airmen said they did not actually decide to join the Air Force until after they had graduated from high school, even if they had been thinking about it earlier.

Major Reasons for Joining. When asked to identify the single most important reason they joined the Air Force, over two-thirds of the airmen said "to continue their education" either while on active duty or by using acquired education benefits after completing their service obligations. For 17 percent

their single most important reason for joining was to obtain a secure job, followed by serving their country (12 percent), and obtaining skill training (11 percent). Figure 13 shows the percent of recruits who chose each option as either their first, second, or third most important reason for joining.



Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

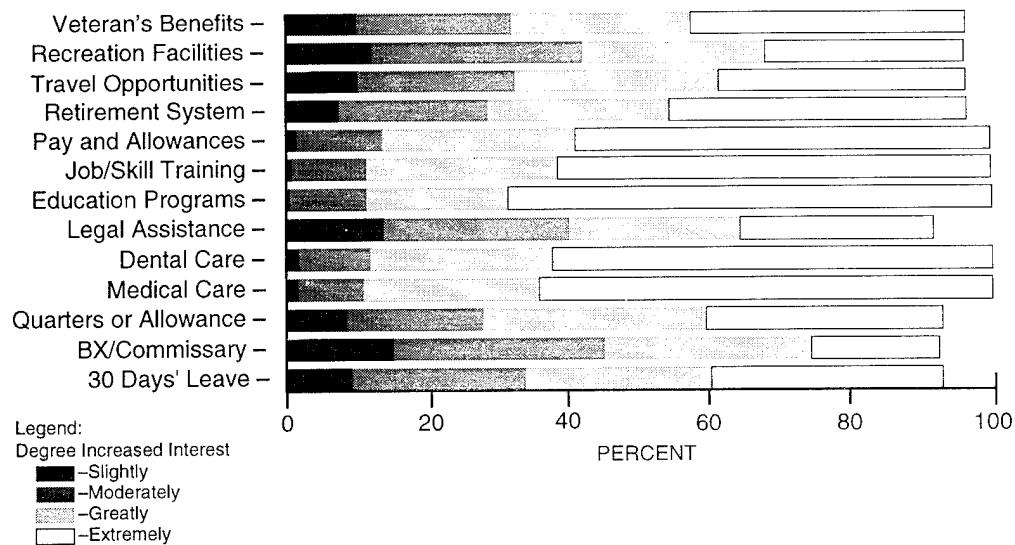
Figure 13. Combined First, Second, and Third Reasons for Joining the Air Force

There were some minor differences between blacks, whites, and Hispanics in their reasons for joining the Air Force. The top two reasons were identical, but there were a few fluctuations after that. Data on the top five reasons are given in table 1 with the percent selecting each option shown in parentheses. Data in figure 13 were cumulative across the top three reasons, while the data in table 1 reflects only the first-choice option.

Table 1
Top Five Most Important Reasons for Joining the Air Force

BLACK	WHITE	HISPANIC
Continue Education (42)	Continue Education (34)	Continue Education (46)
Secure Job (15)	Secure Job (18)	Secure Job (15)
Skill Training (11)	Serve Country (13)	Serve Country (12)
Be On My Own (7)	Skill Training (11)	Skill Training (7)
Gain Job Experience (8)	Job Experience (10)	Be On My Own (6)

The Air Force offers many specific benefits besides those listed above. Figure 14 shows a number of these benefits and how much each contributed to the airmen's decisions to join.



Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 14. Importance of Air Force Benefits to Decision to Join

Air Force versus Other Services. The single most important reason given for joining the Air Force instead of another branch of the military was that the Air Force was seen as a more prestigious service. This has been a consistent finding over the last five years. The second major reason given was that the Air Force offers skills that can be used in the civilian sector (18 percent), and it offers better training (13 percent).

The Alternatives. Over half of the airmen (54 percent) said if they had not been able to join the Air Force, they likely would have attended college or vocational/technical school. Among this recruit pool, blacks and Hispanics were especially inclined to say they would be furthering their education if they had not joined the Air Force (61 percent and 64 percent, respectively). Twenty-eight percent said they would have worked full-time. Fewer than one in five would have enlisted in one of the other services, with most of them choosing the Navy. Although 15 percent had enlisted for six years, another 76 percent said they still would have joined the Air Force even if it meant a longer enlistment. At the time they completed the survey, 38 percent said they would definitely or probably make the Air Force a career and serve until retirement—48 percent were undecided about their career intentions.

Summary

People make decisions based on their own individuality, information that is available to them, inputs from other people, and the life situations in which

they find themselves. As a result, each person who joins the Air Force does so for a unique set of reasons. However, data from newly enlisted members do provide insights into how this common decision is reached, and the data forms valuable feedback to the recruiting process.

For the last several years, the principal reasons individuals have joined the Air Force are the educational benefits and training opportunities afforded by the service. The state of the economy has an increasingly important role in this regard; young people recognize how critical education and job skills are to their long-term success. This perception is true for all groups, independent of their race or ethnic background. Recruiters must provide information about the Air Force that can be understood by potential recruits in light of their educational and career aspirations. This level of information is especially important for blacks and Hispanics. The Air Force should not be seen as just a job to them; it must have a critical place as part of their life goals. Individuals do not make the decision to join the Air Force on their own. Knowing this, recruiters should include in the enlistment process and discussions those persons who have an influential role on prospective recruits. This is a powerful way to indirectly affect the decision making of high-caliber individuals.

Notes

1. Headquarters United States Air Force Recruiting Service, Analysis Division, Randolph AFB, Tex. Based on Defense Manpower Data Center (DMDC) Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) data.
2. Department of Defense (DOD), *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 1993), 50.
3. Ellen Piazza, Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, OSX, Washington, D.C., interview with author, 26 January 1994. See, for example, Dr Sheila E. Widnall, remarks to Paul Revere Chapter of the Air Force Association, Hanscom AFB, Maine, 18 November 1993; and the Air Force recruiting ad in *Jet* magazine, 24 August 1992, which states, "You need a job? The Air Force has jobs."
4. See chap. 3, note 46, for a brief explanation of the survey process.
5. With this program, recruits may elect to have \$100 a month withheld from their paycheck for 12 consecutive months. The government will match this money approximately 12-to-1 for funding the individuals' educational pursuits when they are discharged.
6. Excerpt from *Youth Market ALERT*, no. 8, as reported in the Army Recruiting Command, *Recruiter Journal*, November 1993.

Chapter 5

Enlistment and Job Qualification Standards

One of the three primary purposes of recruiting outlined in chapter 1 is to increase the success of the selection process. This process involves a thorough understanding of the nature of the jobs individuals are being recruited to perform and the legal, social, and institutional influences affecting the organization's personnel structure. These requirements are translated into the personal characteristics desired in applicants. Personal characteristics are typically stated in terms of knowledge and skill levels; learning ability measures; educational attainment; physical attributes; moral indices; and race, ethnic, and gender targets. Finally, the organization's ability to recruit individuals who meet the desired profiles is highly influenced by the extent the characteristics are present in the population at large and the degree to which those who possess them are interested in joining the organization. The interplay of these issues is depicted in figure 15.

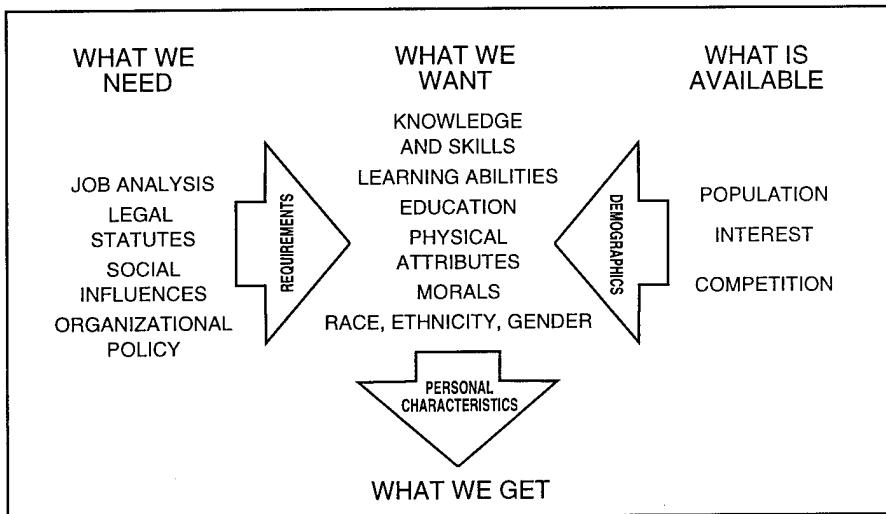


Figure 15. Influences on Recruiting Outcome

Changes in on-the-job tasks as a result of technological, organizational, mission, or policy changes significantly affect the characteristics people must have in order to be successful in the Air Force. These changes, in turn, affect the type of people the Air Force seeks to recruit. Demographic shifts in the American population, fluctuations in the interest America's youth have to-

ward serving in the military, and the success of academia and industry in attracting high-caliber individuals away from military service, expand or contract the size of the recruit pool and influence the degree to which recruiters are able to find interested individuals with the personal traits desired and needed by the Air Force.

Previous sections of this paper discussed social and political influences on military manpower policies. This chapter addresses the more quantitative side of manpower issues. It outlines how enlistment and job qualification standards are linked to job requirements and why these standards are important. The chapter also touches on the pool of candidates from which the Air Force draws its recruits and how changes in the demographics of this pool affect recruiting and potentially affect the Air Force at large.

The Standards-Job Task Link

Most civilian corporations freely recruit and hire individuals from outside existing employee staffs to fill positions throughout the companies. With a few exceptions in the officer corps, the Air Force fills all its active duty positions above the entry level by promoting from within its current membership. By design Air Force recruiters are concerned with finding persons to fill entry-level positions. Applicants must (1) meet the minimum enlistment standards for the Air Force and (2) meet the assignment requirements for the occupational area in which they desire or are willing to work, and for which there is a need for airmen. This two-step process could result in an applicant's qualifying for enlistment in the Air Force but not qualifying for any of the occupational areas with openings. In fact, persons who just meet the current minimum Air Force enlistment standard would qualify for assignment to only one or two occupational areas.¹

Enlistment Standards

The services have specific mental, physical, moral, and medical standards for enlistment. The one that has received the most debate is the mental standard, in part because it categorizes people, and it keeps those who perform poorly on written tests from gaining access to the opportunities offered by military service.

The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) is the primary tool for assessing the cognitive abilities of applicants. It forms the basis of Air Force enlistment standards and the qualification standards for each Air Force occupational area.² The services' enlistment standards are expressed in terms of a score on the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). The AFQT is not actually a separate test—it is composed of four of the 10 subtests from the ASVAB.³ An individual's performance on the AFQT is reported as a percentile score and indicates his or her relative standing among 18-to-23-year-olds, using a 1980 *Profile of American Youth* study sample as the reference group.⁴ The percentiles are grouped into six categories (table 2) reflecting applicant

trainability; persons in Category I are more likely to complete training than those in lower categories.⁵ When the services refer to the "quality" of enlistees, they generally are referring to the proportion of persons in each of the AFQT categories.

Table 2
Armed Forces Qualification Test

AFQT CATEGORIES	PERCENTILE RANGE
I	93-99
II	65-92
III-A	50-64
III-B	31-49
IV	10-30
V	1-9

The Department of Defense, in response to congressional directives, established an AFQT score of 10 as the minimum for induction into the military (Category IV or above). DOD has routinely limited the number of low-aptitude persons the services could enlist during peacetime but greatly increased the influx during wartime, leading many politicians and social scientists to question "why should health, education, training, and post-service benefits be made available to marginally illiterate, disadvantaged youth only in times of war, when the likelihood of death or debilitating injury is much greater?"⁶ Currently, the services are not authorized to enlist more than 20 percent of Category IV persons.⁷

In 1987 DOD began to classify the educational credentials of recruits into three groupings: (1) regular high school graduates, adult diploma holders, and nongraduates with at least 15 hours of college; (2) alternative credential holders, including persons with a general educational development (GED) certificate; and (3) no educational credentials.⁸ This classification facilitated the services' setting different AFQT minimum score requirements for persons with different levels of educational attainment.

The services developed their own enlistment standard policies based on DOD guidance and using both AFQT scores and educational attainment credentials. Each service requires higher AFQT scores of applicants who have a GED certificate than they do of applicants with a high school diploma; they require even higher scores for non-high school graduates than for GED holders.⁹ The specific standards and the rigidity of their implementation have fluctuated over time with changes in policy and the supply of recruits. As of this writing, the Air Force AFQT minimum score requirements are 40 for high school graduates, 50 for GED holders, and 65 for those who have neither finished high school nor earned a GED certificate. Further, Headquarters

Recruiting Service has set a goal stating that 50 percent of the new accessions must be Category I or II personnel. Figure 16 shows the proportion of Categories I and II persons accessed over the last 30 months, the cumulative percent of Categories I to III-A who enlisted over this same period, and the average percent for each fiscal year. One can see there has been a gradual downward trend in the proportion of persons coming from the upper two categories.

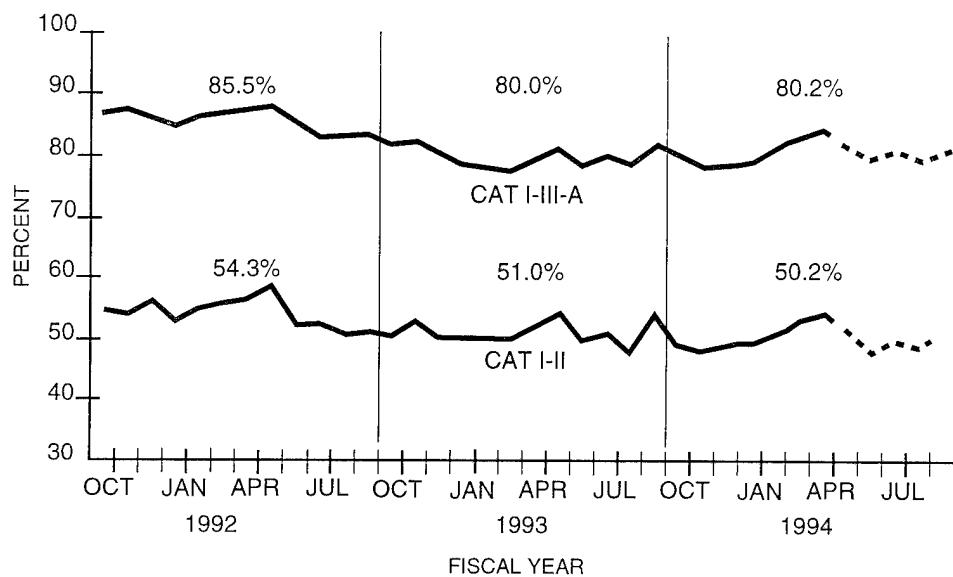


Figure 16. Proportion of Categories I to III-A and I to II

Job Qualification Standards

The Air Force establishes minimum requirements for assignment to each occupational area, using scores from one or more of four ASVAB composites. Composites are combinations of the ten ASVAB subtests. The composites the Air Force uses are called mechanical, administrative, general, and electronic. The names correspond to the types of occupational areas for which they are used to determine an applicant's qualifications. The component subtests for each of the four composites is displayed in table 3.

Each Air Force occupational area has its own unique set of knowledge and skill requirements. The process underlying the setting of job qualification standards involves determining the on-the-job tasks typically performed by airmen within their first term of enlistment, developing training accordingly, evaluating the entry characteristics of successful and unsuccessful performers in both training and on the job, and setting standards to maximize the proportion of successful performers and minimize poor performance and attrition. Understanding this process and how job tasks are linked to recruiting is fundamental to anticipating the effects that changes in Air Force jobs may have on whom the Air Force recruits.

Table 3
Air Force Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery Composites

	Mechanical	Administrative	General	Electronic
Word Knowledge		X	X	
Paragraph Comprehension		X	X	
Arithmetic Reasoning			X	X
Mathematics Knowledge				X
General Science	X			X
Electronics Information				X
Mechanical Comprehension	X			
Auto and Shop Information	X (twice)			
Numerical Operations		X		
Coding Speed		X		

Occupational Analysis

The Air Force relies on a very comprehensive and systematic process to describe the jobs performed by active duty members. Analyzing all Air Force jobs, including those manned by first-term airmen, is the mission of the Air Force Occupational Measurement Squadron (AFOMS) at Randolph AFB, Texas.¹⁰ AFOMS uses a survey-based approach to identify the tasks Air Force members perform and the extent to which they perform them. Subject-matter experts work under the guidance of AFOMS scientists to prepare comprehensive lists of all possible tasks related to an occupational area or to an Air Force Specialty (AFS) and its subspecialties.¹¹ These *job inventories* include task descriptions and the equipment involved in performing the tasks. Job incumbents use the job inventories to describe what they do and how much time they spend on each task relative to other tasks they perform. A survey of each Air Force occupational specialty is conducted every four to five years.

AFOMS task inventory data ultimately influence the standards used to determine whether or not a person qualifies for assignment to an AFS through the data's undergirding of the Air Force training system. The data provided by job incumbents are supplemented by information from supervisors. Job incumbents identify the tasks they perform while supervisors identify the relative difficulty of each task and the degree of emphasis needed to train novices to perform the task successfully. These data are the cornerstones in the process of determining which tasks are taught in formal Air Force technical training courses and for developing the content of career development courses (CDCs)—required correspondence courses aimed at supple-

menting the on-the-job training that typically occurs after airmen arrive at their first duty station.¹²

Basing training curricula on AFOMS occupational analysis data ensures that the training is job relevant and covers the tasks most critical for the majority of airmen to accomplish. Because training is directly tied to job tasks, recruiting, personnel, manpower, and training specialists are able to use formal and informal training performance as a surrogate for job performance. This is helpful since reliable and practical measures of the latter are generally nonexistent.¹³ The characteristics of successful and unsuccessful students serve as a guide for determining what assignment standards are appropriate for an AFS with the intent of selecting persons who can complete formal and informal training and perform well on the job. This process requires that the selection measurements, specifically the AFQT, relate to performance.

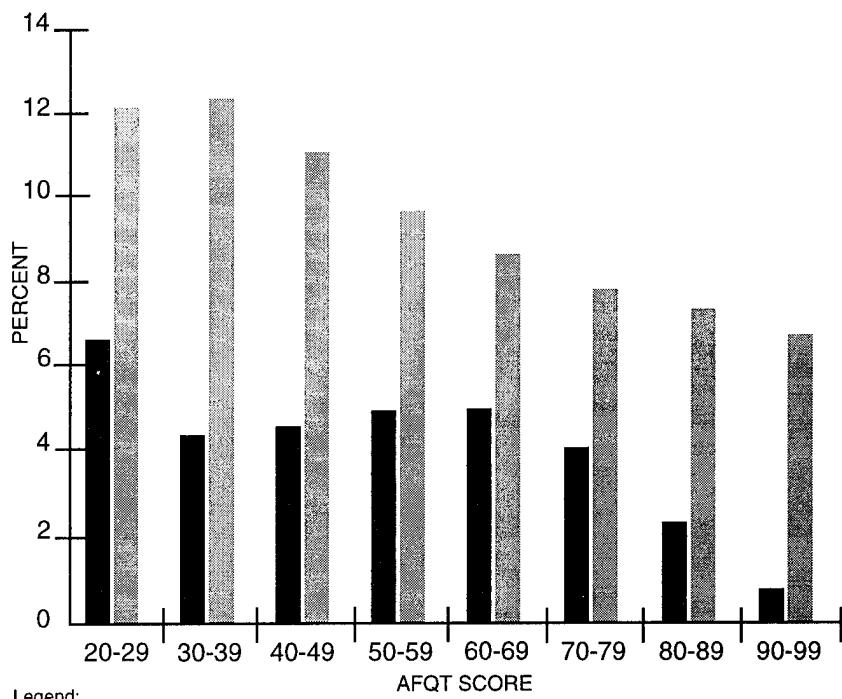
The Standards-Performance Link

There are people who believe most citizens could learn to perform any job in the military to a satisfactory level, given enough training, time, and supervision. For example in an April 1985 interview with author Thomas Sticht, ex-Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara reiterated the position he held in 1966 when he initiated his "Project 100,000" discussed in chapter 2. During the interview Secretary McNamara said, "There are jobs in the service, as there are in our society, that can be performed satisfactorily by properly trained, properly motivated individuals of below the 30th percentile mental quality."¹⁴ While this may be partially true, there is clear evidence that certain members perform their jobs or contribute to mission accomplishment in ways that are less costly for the Air Force than do other members.

Data are routinely collected on the performance of airmen in both basic military training and Air Force technical training programs and used to establish ASVAB score requirements. The minimum acceptable ASVAB scores are higher for those AFSs with more challenging training regimens. While the standards serve to create a more homogeneous group of airmen within an AFS than exists in the population of recruits (at least in terms of their ASVAB scores), there is enough variability in their entrance scores to reveal a clear relationship between aptitude and performance in training (fig. 17).¹⁵ This relationship has been found in numerous studies of the enlisted forces across the services and across occupational areas.¹⁶ Of equal interest is the impact on minorities that occurs as a result of using the ASVAB to select and classify recruits.

ASVAB Testing Impacts on Minorities

Using the ASVAB to screen candidates for enlistment and job placement results in a greater proportion of minorities' being denied entry into the Air



Legend:

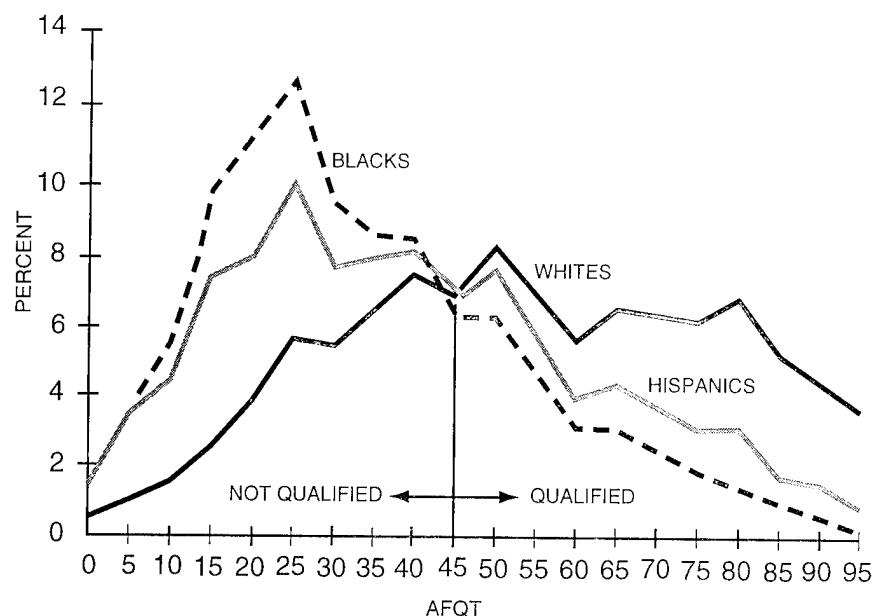
■ -Tech Training
▨ -Basic Training

Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 17. Basic and Technical Training Attrition by AFQT Score

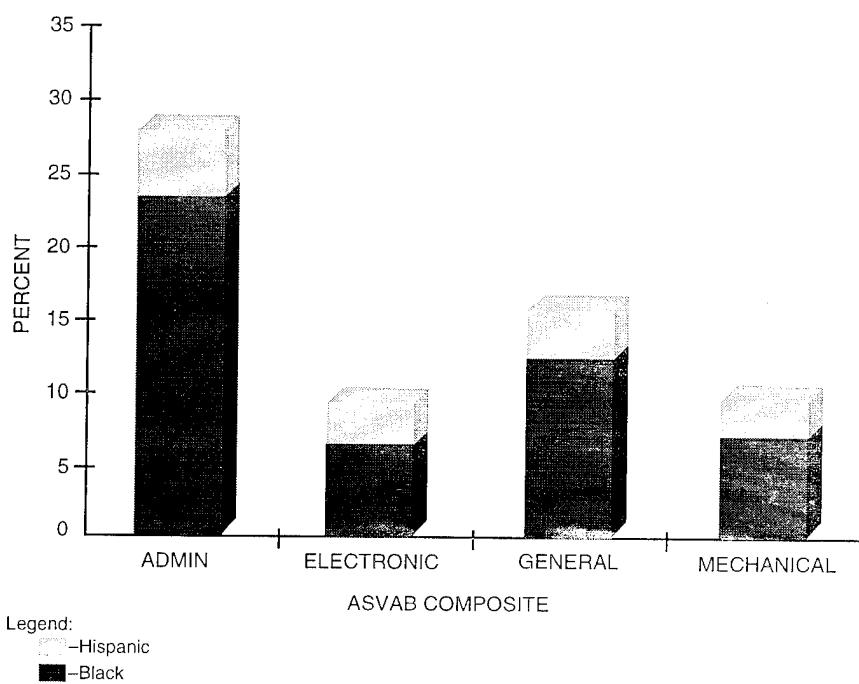
Force or access to certain occupational areas than is the case for white applicants. Figure 18 shows why this is the case. The distributions of AFQT scores for all black, white, and Hispanic test takers during 1990 are positioned over different parts of the AFQT score continuum. In fact, fewer than 40 percent of black persons and 50 percent of Hispanic persons who took the ASVAB in 1990 met the Air Force minimum requirement for the AFQT; 75 percent of whites met the minimum.¹⁷

Minority candidates do not do as well on the quantitatively oriented portions of the ASVAB as do their white counterparts.¹⁸ As a result, those blacks and Hispanics who do meet the minimum Air Force enlistment standard are more likely to be classified into the administrative or general career areas rather than the mechanical or electronic ones (fig. 19). While one could argue that all the Air Force training and education is beneficial, it is the technical AFSs which have higher-paying equivalents in the civilian sector and are the ones predicted to experience the greatest growth over the next decade. For example, the median weekly income in 1992 for typists and word processors was \$354; for shipping and receiving clerks, \$348; for electronic technicians, \$604; and for computer programmers, \$685.¹⁹ The impact, then, of using the ASVAB to select and classify airmen is that minorities are selected proportionally less often and are directed into jobs that are less technical and that



Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 18. AFQT Distribution for Blacks, Whites, and Hispanics—1990 Tests



Source: Headquarters USAFRS/RSOA

Figure 19. Skill Group Minority Manning (1990-92 Year Groups)

have lower-paying parallels in the civilian labor force. Given the relationship between tasks performed on the job and the standards that ultimately open or close enlistment opportunities to persons seeking to join the Air Force, what can be said about future Air Force jobs and their impact on recruiting in general and on minorities in particular?

Future Job Requirements

There is no shortage of writings about the future;²⁰ the nature of military engagements in the next century;²¹ what new roles and missions the Air Force will encounter as a result of technological, cultural, or environmental changes;²² nor even how these could be exploited to the benefit of the United States.²³ In addition to essays on theory and practice for employing airpower, Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, devotes attention to organizing, training, and equipping the Air Force with an eye to the future.²⁴ However, what all the writings seem to lack is a discussion linking job tasks of the future to Air Force personnel needs that then can be translated into recruiting terms.

There is clear evidence that Air Force jobs are changing. There has been a steady growth of technical jobs in the military over the last 35 years.²⁵ The “proportion of skilled technicians and specialists [needed] to operate and maintain increasingly sophisticated weaponry” has been increasing incrementally each year.²⁶ This is consistent with trends in the civilian sector.

In their much publicized book, *Workforce 2000*, authors Johnston and Packer cite a general trend toward jobs’ becoming more cognitively demanding as technology either replaces or negates many manual or unskilled tasks. They note that “overall, the skill mix of the economy will be moving rapidly upscale, with most new jobs demanding more education and higher levels of language, math, and reasoning skills.”²⁷ Their study concluded that while 42 percent of jobs in 1984 required one or more years of college, 62 percent of those created between 1984 and 2000 will necessitate college-level education.²⁸ If shifts in the nature of military jobs reflect the occupational shifts experienced in the civilian sector,²⁹ then one would expect Air Force jobs to become more cognitively demanding as well.

There have been other changes to job tasks as a result of factors besides technology. The scope of tasks and responsibilities performed within an occupational area is increasing. This applies to jobs performed by new enlistees as well as to jobs of career airmen. This increasing breadth of tasks performed by any one person flows from the downsizing of the Air Force. Fewer people means each person must be capable of performing a wider variety of tasks. This demand ultimately puts pressure on the formal and informal training systems to ensure everyone knows how to perform an ever-increasing number of tasks.

Summary

Air Force enlistment and job qualification standards serve to increase the success of the recruiting and selection process by screening out those persons with less than an acceptable chance of completing training and performing well on the job. The characteristics of successful performers, particularly their scores on the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery, form the basis for enlistment and job qualification standards. Persons on the upper end of the ASVAB score distribution tend to experience lower attrition in both basic military training and technical skill training programs. This fact is recognized at the highest levels of the Department of Defense. As Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney said in his 1993 *Annual Report to the President and the Congress*, "Recruiting high quality people must continue since lower quality recruits increase training requirements, lower readiness, and reduce the operational flexibility of the armed forces."³⁰ Blacks and Hispanics, however, do not tend to score as high on the ASVAB as their white counterparts. As a result, they are disproportionately rejected from military service and from qualifying for those jobs with the greatest long-term economic benefits.

As Air Force jobs continue to change and become more technically challenging, and as minority groups grow as a proportion of the American population, the weight on the recruiter's shoulders to find high-quality minority applicants will increase. As the USAF director of personnel recently noted, "Of utmost concern in this procurement mission is the issue of quality. We would like to see test scores and quality indicators approximately the same for racial and ethnic groups. Meeting accession targets is important, but not at the expense of lowering standards."³¹

Notes

1. Lt Col Michael Schiefer, Headquarters USAF Recruiting Service (Headquarters USAFRS), Research and Analysis Branch, Randolph AFB, Tex., interview with author, relating analyses conducted by USAFHRs using the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) data, 10 August 1993. An exact calculation of the number of AFSs a person would not qualify for is not possible because the AFS assignment standards are based on different combinations of the ASVAB subtests from those used in the Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT). The interrelationship of the subtests does allow the prediction that one would qualify for only one or two AFSs.

2. Mental testing was institutionalized by the military in World War I with the development of the Army *Alpha* and *Beta* tests used to select individuals with minimum aptitudes to learn soldiering and other skills. Entrance testing was greatly expanded during World War II to include the use of tests to select pilot candidates. The Armed Forces Qualification Test emerged in 1950 and was being routinely administered in high schools by 1958. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery was implemented in 1968 and became the principal military enlistment test in 1976, forming a common standard and baseline measure for use across all the services. The ASVAB is a paper-and-pencil test composed of 10 separate subtests and takes about three and one-half hours to complete. Scores are generally reported as percentiles (0-99), using the 1980 youth population as the norm, or reference, group. Versions of the ASVAB are administered in high schools as a vocational counseling tool, although the scores are acceptable for Air Force enlistment purposes, if not over two years old. Most tests adminis-

tered to applicants for enlistment occur at Military Entrance Processing Stations (MEPS). Computer-administered versions are in the final stages of development. Briefing, George Germadnik, Headquarters Recruiting Service, RSOAM, subject: Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), July 1993.

3. Two of the ASVAB subtests—work knowledge and paragraph comprehension—are combined into a *verbal* component. Two other subtests—arithmetic reasoning and mathematics knowledge—are combined into a *quantitative* component. The AFQT is calculated using two times the verbal component score plus one time the quantitative component score. In other words, twice the weight is given to one's verbal ability as one's mathematical ability in calculating the AFQT.

4. This was a Department of Labor and DOD study involving a nationally drawn sample of youth to study a breadth of job-related attitudes and experiences.

5. This is similar in concept and practice to persons with high Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores being able to complete college more easily than those with low scores for a given school.

6. Thomas G. Sticht et al., *Cast-off Youth: Policy and Training Methods from the Military Experience* (New York: Praeger, 1987), 82.

7. DOD Directive 1145.1, *Qualitative Distribution of Military Manpower*, 22 January 1986, citing the 1981 Defense Authorization Act.

8. Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense, Force Management and Personnel, *Population Representation in the Military Services: Fiscal Year 1991* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, October 1992), 13.

9. Ibid.

10. Information on the occupational analysis process validated with Mr Jay Tartell, Air Force Occupational Measurement Squadron, Randolph AFB, Tex., telephone interview with author, 25 April 1994.

11. An *engine mechanic* is an example of an AFS as used here. *Jet engine mechanic* or *turboprop engine mechanic* are examples of subspecialties. Most initial classification of airmen into jobs occurs at the AFS level.

12. AFOMS data are used also in writing specialty knowledge tests (SKT), part of the enlisted promotion system, and so influence the longer term career success of airmen.

13. Mark S. Teachout and Maj Martin W. Pellum, *Air Force Research to Link Standards for Enlistment to On-The-Job Performance* (Brooks AFB, Tex.: Air Force Human Resources Laboratory, February 1991), 5.

14. Sticht et al., 191.

15. Variability is required in both the predictor (in this case, test scores) and the criterion (training performance) to demonstrate a relationship such as a correlation between the two. If everyone had the same entrance test score but different performance scores, the entrance test says nothing about who would or would not be a successful performer—the correlation would be zero. Similarly, if everyone had the same performance score but different entrance test scores, one could not use test scores to identify who would be the better performers—they are all the same. Again, the correlation would be zero. Selecting individuals above a certain ASVAB score serves to restrict the variability of the scores for persons in an AFS and therefore suppresses the magnitude of any relationship between the test scores and performance. Data reported here are therefore conservative estimates of the true relationship between test scores and performance.

16. See, for example, Martin W. Pellum and Mark S. Teachout, "A Longitudinal Evaluation of Training Effectiveness Using Multiple Levels of Information" (Paper presented at the Annual Convention of the Society of Industrial and Organizational Psychologists, Miami, Fla., 21 April 1990); Lauress Wise et al., *Sensitivity and Fairness of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Technical Composites*, DMDC Technical Report 92-002 (Monterey, Calif.: Defense Manpower Data Center, December 1992); Linda Sawin, "FASTRACS: Flexible Ability-Synchronized Training Course Schedules," briefing, Armstrong Laboratory Human Resources Directorate, Brooks AFB, Tex., undated; and Richard L. Fernandez and Jeffrey B. Garfinkle, *Setting Enlistment Standards and Matching Recruits to Jobs Using Job Performance Criteria* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, January 1985).

17. Based on Headquarters USAFRS analyses.
18. This finding is consistent with other cognitive ability measures that reflect individual socialization and educational patterns. For example, over the last 10 years blacks have averaged almost 100 points below whites and 30 points below Hispanics on the verbal portion of the SAT, and 110 points below whites and just about 50 points below Hispanics on the quantitative portion of the SAT. Department of Education, *Digest of Educational Statistics: 1993*, 127.
19. Data are from Headquarters USAF Recruiting Service Analysis Division, Randolph AFB, Tex., using Bureau of Labor Statistics reports.
20. John Naisbitt and Patricia Aburdene, *Megatrends 2000: Ten New Directions for the 1990s* (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1990).
21. Manuel DeLand, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (New York: Swerve Editions, 1991).
22. Maj James L. Rodgers, "Future Warfare and the Space Campaign," research paper (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air Command and Staff College, 1993).
23. Col John A. Warden, "Exploiting Air Power into the Twenty-First Century," in *The Future of Air Power in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*, ed. Richard H. Shultz, Jr. and Robert L Pfaltzgraff, Jr. (Maxwell AFB, Ala.: Air University Press, July 1992), 57-82.
24. Essay W, "Organizing to Win"; Essay X, "Training the Air Force: The Four Components"; and Essay Y, "Equipping the Modern Air Force," in Air Force Manual (AFM) 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, March 1992, 229, 239, and 251.
25. Martin Binkin, *Military Technology and Defense Manpower* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1986), 8-9.
26. Ibid., 9.
27. William B. Johnston and Arnold H. Packer, *Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the 21st Century* (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hudson Institute, June 1987), 96.
28. Ibid., 98.
29. Binkin, 35.
30. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to the President and the Congress* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, January 1993), 50.
31. USAF/PD to AETC/CC and USAFA superintendent, letter, 7 January 1994.

Chapter 6

Conclusions and Recommendations

This paper highlights several issues to consider in developing and implementing a minority recruiting strategy for the Air Force; specifically one that is aimed at increasing the representation of black and Hispanic persons. While many works are available that address particular elements of the issue of minorities' serving in the military, this paper attempts to pull together information from a variety of sources and advance the recruiters' appreciation, if not the understanding, of the social, political, and practical issues that underlie the topic of accessing racial and ethnic minorities into the enlisted force. Several conclusions can be drawn from information presented in this paper.

Military manpower policies inherently reflect the social and political perspectives of the nation. As the country's largest employer—especially of young people—the military is tightly woven into the cultural fabric of the nation. New enlistees bring with them viewpoints, attitudes, knowledge, and skills shaped by their peers, parents, schools, television, and all the other sources of personal influence in society. Selecting military members from across the spectrum of society rather than from one class or stratum embodies the Revolutionary War's militia tradition that has carried the nation through more than two centuries.

As a bastion of civilian governmental control, the military is a powerful forum for implementing political agendas related to who serves and who is served. Military manpower policies flowing from white majority-controlled administrations once kept racial and ethnic minorities out of the service except in time of war. At other times, they kept minority members segregated in specific units and/or relegated to menial or dangerous jobs. More recently, the military has been used as an employment avenue for youth from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds who had no, or otherwise very limited, opportunities for gainful employment.

Today's military strives to open opportunities to as many people as possible while holding the line on quality. Exactly how this policy will pan out over the next 10 to 50 years is difficult to say since it is hard to predict the direction of domestic politics. One thing seems sure: the military will continue to be used as a catalyst for social change—from advancing the country's technology base to providing education and training for America's youth. Recruiters need to keep in mind that the personnel accession policies they are asked to implement have roots in the social and political elements of society.

Each of the Air Force's main advertising avenues increases the interest of potential recruits from all racial and ethnic groups. The presence of Air Force-specific advertising in the form of television and radio commercials, magazine and newspaper advertisements, billboards, brochures, and direct mail has been declining for years as a result of cuts in the recruiting budget and rising advertising business costs. A smaller cadre of recruiters and fewer dollars to sponsor their attendance at conventions, visits to schools, and conduct of center-of-influence activities have aggravated the advertising dilemma. This is of particular concern given the research finding that hands-on type activities, such as base visits or opportunities to see the Air Force Thunderbirds in action, have the greatest influence on applicant interest in joining the Air Force. These actions may need to be reserved for hard-to-get high-caliber black, Hispanic, and/or specially skilled persons.

The interest of American youth in military service has followed the same track as the recruiting budgets: down. Further cuts in the Air Force's reach and frequency of advertising could have long-lasting effects on the interest level of the applicant pool and make for a more difficult recruiting market environment in the future.

The chapter on why individuals join the Air Force and how they come to make that decision emphasized that individuals have many reasons for enlisting. They consider different criteria and they place more importance on some criteria than on others; this varies from person to person. Recruiters need to keep this in mind when talking to prospective enlistees. Each person is unique and needs to be understood in that context. From the data presented here, there does not appear to be significant differences in the reasons blacks, whites, or Hispanics join the Air Force. Anecdotal information suggests that the basic message about the Air Force and its appeal to applicants is consistent across all groups of people, but the delivery mechanism may need to be different for each group. For example, Air Force advertising in the minority communities should depict minority persons in the advertisements. Similarly, young minority persons may be more receptive to working with a recruiter of their race or ethnic group even if he or she shares the same information about the Air Force as would a nonminority recruiter. This ability for the recruiter to identify with and be identified by the minority community could spell the difference in attracting the quality of minority candidate the Air Force needs.

The Air Force is attractive to young people with vision and goals for themselves and who see formal education and specific job skills as keys to achieving their aspirations. Despite a few individual differences, newly enlisted airmen put education and training at the top of their list of reasons for joining the Air Force. This is especially true for blacks and Hispanics. Given the proportionally low statistics on college enrollment and completion for minorities, those minorities joining the Air Force are in a relatively elite group and will take steps to achieve their dream. Today's recruits enjoy being part of a team and recognize that being members of the Air Force team sets them apart—they see the Air Force as the most prestigious of the services and as offering them opportunities they cannot get elsewhere. To the extent that

"birds of a feather flock together," recruiters can use this information to continue to attract more high-caliber individuals to the Air Force; however, recruiters will not find this caliber of person just walking down the street. They will be the ones known by the local college registrars and company human-resource training departments because that is where they are going to improve their education and career opportunities.

Individuals do not decide in a vacuum to join the Air Force. The vast majority of airmen talked over their decision with their parents, spouses/fiancés, and siblings and sought their advice and consent. Having a parent or relative with prior military experience increases one's propensity to consider joining the military, but these significant others still influence the final decision whether or not they were or are in the service. Fewer blacks and Hispanics have parents or siblings with a military affiliation, but they still turn to their friends and family members for advice when considering joining the Air Force. Knowing this, recruiters need to work harder to get information about the Air Force into the hands of young black and Hispanic men and women, and they need to include their parents, spouses, fiancés, or other people of importance to them during the enlistment process. Calls and/or visits to parents or other family members would seem a potent way to indirectly influence a quality individual's decision to join the Air Force.

The chapter on enlistment and job qualification standards emphasizes that of all the requirements, those related to mental aptitude have proven the most contentious. The services use the Armed Forces Qualification Test, a composite of four of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery subtests, as their primary enlistment standards tool. Congress has limited the number of enlistments into the services by persons who score at the lower end of the AFQT distribution, but service-specific standards generally exceed those set by Congress and the Department of Defense. Each service requires that persons without a high school diploma score higher on the AFQT than those with a diploma. The services use their own sets of ASVAB composites for determining job qualifications.

In the aggregate, black and Hispanic persons do not score as high on the ASVAB as whites and are therefore rejected from service in proportions greater than their representation among applicants would suggest. This makes the enlistment qualification standards and the process of using mental testing two issues for debate for those who perceive the military as offering opportunities to youth from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds. These issues may become more acute as Air Force jobs become more technically complex and demanding of airmen with higher aptitudes.

The chapter goes on to establish that the standards used by the Air Force to determine a person's service potential are based on a systematic, empirical process that begins with a thorough analysis of the tasks airmen perform on the job. These tasks form the basis for the formal technical skill training that occurs after airmen complete basic military training, and the less formal on-the-job training that takes place once airmen arrive at their duty stations. The preenlistment characteristics of airmen who successfully complete the

formal and informal training requirements are analyzed and guide the establishment of job qualification standards.

Evidence of the need to hold fast to the quality issue emerged in the data showing the negative relationship between the AFQT and basic military training attrition and between the AFQT and technical training attrition; higher-scoring individuals do better in these two training settings. In addition, the AFQT has been found to relate to both the level of performance on the job and the time it takes the airmen to reach proficiency in their job tasks. Finally, higher-scoring applicants generally provide the Air Force greater flexibility in the initial assignment process since they qualify for more jobs. The bottom line is that there are solid reasons and advantages to continuing to pursue recruiting high-aptitude persons. Recruiters must reach out and find these people and work with them on a personal level if the Air Force is to attract them away from academia and industry.

The challenges presented to recruiters today and over the next decade are enormous. Balancing all the tasks the recruiter must perform is not easy. To recruit high-quality black and Hispanic persons amid changes in policies requires that recruiters be creative, share information, and learn from each other's successes. This paper hopefully has shed some light on several of the issues recruiters must contemplate in developing strategies to recruit the individuals who will carry the Air Force forward to the next century.